

## Dissemination of information on voluntary return: How to reach irregular migrants; Study by the German National Contact Point for the European Migration Network (EMN)

Grote, Janne

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Federal Office  
for Migration  
and Refugees



# Dissemination of information on voluntary return: How to reach irregular migrants

Study by the German National Contact Point  
for the European Migration Network (EMN)

Working Paper 65

Janne Grote



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# Dissemination of information on voluntary return: How to reach irregular migrants

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for the European Migration Network (EMN)

Janne Grote

Federal Office for Migration and Refugees 2015

# Summary

Measures of assisted voluntary return (AVR) and forced return constitute a central element of German and European asylum and migration management policy with regard to irregularly-staying third-country nationals, albeit voluntary returns categorically take precedence over forced returns. According to the most recent estimates, in 2013 there were between 180,000 and 520,000 third-country nationals who had absconded or whose residence on the territory had never been known to the authorities. Furthermore, a total of 142,281 third-country nationals who were obliged to leave the country were registered in Germany as per 31 December 2014, 110,472 of whom had had their deportation temporarily suspended and who received an exceptional leave to remain (*Duldung*). A total of 13,574 persons left voluntarily in 2014 via the REAG/GARP return programme, which is officially promoted by the Federal Government and the Federal States. Three-fourth of these voluntary returnees were third-country nationals without a proper residence permit. 12,844 persons were returned by force in the same year and either deported or removed. Furthermore, another high four-figure number of persons is likely to have voluntarily returned to their countries of origin or to third countries in recent years annually via assisted voluntary return (AVR) and/or reintegration measures (AVRR) packages of the Federal States and the municipalities, and independently of REAG/GARP. Besides these other third-country nationals leave the federal territory voluntarily without any of these voluntary or forced measures.

## The circumstances of and actors in return counselling and the dissemination of information

All in all, the federal statutory provisions as well as the laws of the Federal States regarding voluntary return (counselling) and the dissemination of information remain rather general, and leave the actors involved in voluntary returns considerable leeway. There is no legal entitlement to assisted voluntary return and/or reintegration (AVRR) in the case of voluntary return. Standardised nationwide guidelines or directives e. g. regarding the information to be provided in return

counselling or the time when the dissemination of information is to take place, do not exist.

There is great diversity in actors nationwide when it comes to the organisation of, counselling about and the dissemination of information on voluntary return. Besides the distinction between governmental and non-governmental actors, it is possible to differentiate between the scope of the actors' activities (international, nationwide, Federal State-wide, municipal) and the target group of the counselling as well as the information available. Accordingly, on the one hand, one finds networking and exchange platforms which do not provide any direct return counselling for returnees who are willing or obliged to leave the country, but where information for counselling centres is processed. On the other hand, there are actors offering either general return counselling or targeted counselling and information as part of a separate return programme or reintegration project.

## Channels of information dissemination, as well as their appearance and accessibility

Information dissemination and return counselling take place via diverse channels. Personal counselling, websites, as well as leaflets and brochures, represent the most widespread channels, although information is also provided in other forms, including posters, annual reports, presentations at events and public relations work in the form of press releases, interviews and advertisements. The diversity of languages differs greatly. Websites are often only available in German, sometimes also in English, and only rarely in additional languages. Some actors translate project leaflets into up to twelve languages and distribute them. Personal counselling is offered in German and one or more other languages besides, some counselling centres in large cities being able to offer return counselling in up to 16 languages. Counselling centres are typically open for several hours on several days a week. Personal counselling is very generally free of charge for persons without any financial means.

## Challenges in the dissemination of information/current developments

Besides a lack of long-term financial security with regard to return counselling centres and projects, the actors that are involved in return counselling and the dissemination of information cite *region-specific*, *status-specific* and *situation-specific* challenges in particular. One region-specific challenge, for example, results from the in some cases great disparity in the concentration of governmental and non-governmental return counselling centres in Germany. While return counselling coverage is ensured by a variety of actors in almost all parts of Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Hamburg, North Rhine-Westphalia and Rhineland-Palatinate amongst others, some Federal States particularly lack non-governmental counselling centres. Non-governmental actors are however considered to be of specific importance to third-country nationals without prior contact with the authorities or those who have absconded. The latter tend to grant non-governmental organisations a leap of faith, as they ensure anonymity, their counselling is conducted in an open-ended manner and it does include the option of the persons' non-return. In contrast, governmental return counselling centres focus on the compliance of the obligation to leave the federal territory.

Status-specific challenges in the context of assisted voluntary return arise both with regard to registered third-country nationals who are obliged to leave the country, and to those who have absconded. Challenges resulting from the short period that is allowed for departure, and the frequent relative unwillingness to return, are cited in the first case (e.g. among those whose deportation has been temporarily suspended). The question of regional and administrative jurisdiction has proven to be a problem in the latter case. In the event of AVR(R), absconding third-country nationals must as a matter of principle return to the foreigners authority where they were most recently registered before their absconding unless the Federal State in which the apprehension or voluntary registration took place agrees to be responsible for their return – including all support measures. Such a take-over is however not always approved, even though the authorities could have facilitated an assisted voluntary return. The original municipality however may execute a forced return under the reservation of a judicial order and within the narrowly defined legal provisions.

The extent of the available information, the practical experience that has been gathered in implementing assisted voluntary returns, the degree of sensitivity for the circumstances to be anticipated subsequent to return in each individual case, and the readiness to co-operate on the part of the actors involved in the return process, can sometimes vary widely depending on the situation. These are influenced by the concentration of counselling centres and the diversity of their sponsors.

## Current developments

Two developments can be identified with regard to the changes that are planned to take place regarding assisted voluntary return and the dissemination of information to (irregular staying) third-country nationals, or of such changes which are already being developed and negotiated. Firstly, one should mention the work of the Coordination Agency for 'Integrated Return Management' of the Federal Government and the Federal States (*Bund-Länder-Koordinierungsstelle 'Integriertes Rückkehrmanagement'*), which develops concepts in order to reinforce the connection between individual measures in returns (voluntary returns, reintegration and forced returns) and to create uniform standards and directions for action, especially concerning voluntary return and reintegration. Furthermore, a development can be discerned towards an increased networking and institutionalisation of the information exchange between governmental and non-governmental actors in voluntary returns on all relevant levels.



# Table of Contents

	Summary	4
1	Introduction	11
2	Irregular migration and return	14
3	Legislation and policy on voluntary return and the dissemination of information on voluntary return	23
4	Overall national approach to disseminating information on voluntary return	29
5	Information strategy pursued by the 'Reintegration Assistance for Returnees to Vietnam' project (Berlin)	55
6	Challenges of the dissemination of information and return counselling	58
7	Conclusion	63
	Appendix	65
	Bibliography	76
	Abbreviations	86
	List of Tables	88
	Publications of the Research Centre of the Federal Office	89



# Contents

	<b>Summary</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Irregular migration and return</b>	<b>14</b>
	2.1 A definition of irregular migration	14
	2.2 Scale of irregular migration	15
	2.2.1 Irregularly-staying third-country nationals (persons without prior contact with the authorities and absconders)	16
	2.2.2 Third-country nationals obliged to leave the country	18
	2.3 Voluntary return and forced return	18
	2.3.1 The extent of voluntary return under REAG/GARP	19
	2.3.2 Scale of forced return (deportations and removals)	21
<b>3</b>	<b>Legislation and policy on voluntary return and the dissemination of information on voluntary return</b>	<b>23</b>
	3.1 Provisions of federal law	23
	3.2 Provisions of the Federal States	25
	3.3 Stipulations on the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund	27
<b>4</b>	<b>Overall national approach to disseminating information on voluntary return</b>	<b>29</b>
	4.1 Actors in the dissemination of information	30
	4.1.1 Networking and exchange platforms	31
	4.1.2 Return counselling centres	35
	4.1.3 Return and reintegration projects	41
	4.1.4 Funding of return counselling and reintegration projects	45
	4.2 Tools used to disseminate information on voluntary return	46
	4.3 Accessibility and visual presentation of information	49
	4.3.1 Range of languages	49
	4.3.2 Visual presentation	50
	4.3.3 Placement of information material	51

4.3.4	Accessibility of online services	51
4.3.5	Accessibility of counselling centres and hotlines as well as the costs involved	52
4.3.6	Confidentiality considerations	52
4.4	Contents of the information	52
<b>5</b>	<b>Information strategy pursued by the ‘Reintegration Assistance for Returnees to Vietnam’ project (Berlin)</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Challenges of the dissemination of information and return counselling</b>	<b>58</b>
6.1	Region-specific challenges	58
6.2	Status-specific challenges	59
6.3	Situation-specific challenges	60
6.4	Financial challenges and planning reliability of project work	61
6.5	Lessons learned and outlook	62
<b>7</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>63</b>
	<b>Appendix</b>	<b>65</b>
A 1:	The number of third-country nationals who have returned (2010-2014)	65
A 2:	Description of data-collection methods used	67
A 3:	BAMF-leaflet on assisted voluntary return for rejected applicants for international protection	68
A 4:	Actors in voluntary return: websites, leaflets and reports	72
A 5:	Advertisement and article on the ‘Reintegration Assistance for Returnees to Vietnam’ project	75
	<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>76</b>
	<b>Abbreviations</b>	<b>86</b>
	<b>List of Tables</b>	<b>88</b>
	<b>Publications of the Research Centre of the Federal Office</b>	<b>89</b>



# 1 Introduction

In 2001, the Independent Commission on Migration to Germany (*Unabhängige Kommission Zuwanderung – UKZU*), established by the then Minister of the Interior Otto Schily, outlined the challenges of a consistent immigration and asylum policy. As it reads in the final report: “It is vital that foreigners who no longer have the right to stay in Germany actually leave for their home countries or for third countries – for the sole purpose of being able to manage immigration and shape a credible immigration policy. [...] Likewise, all measures of the legislature, the courts and the authorities to expedite the proceedings lose their meaning if the establishment of the obligation to leave is not followed by departure” (UKZU 2001: 150). Measures of assisted return and forced return thus make up an essential component of German and European asylum and migration management policy, albeit the practice of assisted voluntary return reaches back to the late 1970s, when the focus was however still primarily on labour migrants and immigrants who became unemployed (Schmidt-Fink 2007). In its coalition agreement from 2013, the current government likewise provides for a “consistent return of persons without special protection needs”, for which a “coordinated strategy” must be developed (CDU/CSU/SPD 2013: 109). According to the Federal Government, voluntary returns, reintegration measures and forced returns must be counted as part of such a strategic return policy that should be bundled into an “Integrated Return Management” (Deutscher Bundestag 2014a: 2). The Coordination Agency for ‘Integrated Return Management’ of the Federal Government and the Federal States (*BLK IRM*) was established in 2014 under the coordination of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees, and is tasked with developing such a strategy to promote, enforce and link (assisted) voluntary returns and forced returns, especially of irregularly-staying third-country nationals.

Assisted voluntary return is regarded as a more humane form of return in relation to forced return, and as more economical in comparison to the practice of deportation (Schmidt-Fink 2009: 9). A few governmental actors also endorse assisted voluntary return vis-à-vis continued residence in Germany, arguing that,

where third-country nationals<sup>1</sup> become unemployed, assisted return thus relieves the burden on the social security budgets (Landeshauptstadt München 2015: 4, Landkreis Böblingen 2010: 1). Voluntary return is therefore sometimes described as the “*via regia*” (Schneider/Kreienbrink 2010: 61; Prashma 2006: 8) of return policy, or as the “paragon of humanitarian asylum policy” (MIFKJF 2015: 9).

On the other hand, criticism of voluntary return is voiced regarding both its ‘voluntary’ nature as well as the concept of ‘return’: “The spectrum of positions ranges in this regard from the opinion that a return can only be voluntary if there is still an option to stay, through the position that a foreigner can return voluntarily and even with assistance given that the alternative is forced return, to the notion that voluntary merely implies the absence of physical force in the context of a return” (Black/Gent 2006: 19, echoing Schneider/Kreienbrink 2010: 21; Tietze 2008: 76; Paul/Sebastian 2005: 85 et seqq.). Furthermore, some criticise the notion of ‘return’ because, in the context of voluntary return, some children do not ‘return’, but rather leave for their parents’ country of origin, while they themselves were born in Germany (Dünnwald 2011: 2). In practice, such criticism of voluntary return has led to especially non-governmental organisations categorically refusing to support assisted voluntary return for quite some time. In the meantime, however, a change of attitude towards, or rather a differentiation

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1 According to Article 2 of the Schengen Borders Code (SBC), the term “third-country national” refers to “any person who is not a Union citizen within the meaning of Article 17(1) of the Treaty” and who is not included among the “persons enjoying the Community right of free movement” defined under Article 2 number 5 of (Regulation (EC) No. 562/2006). Accordingly, “Union citizens within the meaning of Article 17(1) of the Treaty, and third-country nationals who are members of the family of a Union citizen exercising his or her right to free movement to whom Directive 2004/38/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 29 April 2004 on the right of citizens of the Union and their family members to move and reside freely within the territory of the Member States applies” (Article 2 number 5 of Regulation (EC) No. 562/2006) are not considered third-country nationals by this definition.

of perspectives on, the voluntary return model has taken place in this regard among numerous non-governmental actors. Today, numerous non-governmental organisations and especially non-statutory welfare umbrella organisations actively participate for example in return counselling or also as part of their own reintegration projects. Bremerhaven Workers' Welfare Association (*Arbeiterwohlfahrt – AWO*) sums up the change as follows:

“While the early years were marked by the challenge of developing voluntary return and humanitarian reintegration into an accepted working approach in refugee aid at all, the coming years will be defined in particular by granting precedence to voluntary return over coercive measures, that is detention and deportation” (AWO 2015).

The support of voluntary return can take on a variety of forms, such as return counselling, providing the necessary travel documents, meeting transport costs, granting financial travel benefits, providing initial aid and support in the search for accommodation in the country of origin, ensuring medical care in the destination country, through to comprehensive reintegration measures in the form of training before departure, start-up funding for small businesses and assistance with the reintegration process through local support networks over a prolonged period of time.

## The topic and aim of this study

This study focuses on the question of what actors provide what information, via what channels of communication, and in what form, on the possibilities of voluntary return to irregularly-staying third-country nationals. To this end, the first step will be to provide an overview of the scope and structure of the population of irregularly-staying third-country nationals, as well as of voluntary and forced departures from Germany (Chapter 2). Next, the legal circumstances surrounding voluntary return in general, and the dissemination of information for irregularly-staying third-country nationals and the actors involved in particular, will be described (Chapter 3). This will be followed by an analysis of well-established information strategies in which the following criteria will be considered: the actors involved and their role in the dissemination of information, the channels of com-

munication and the media used by these actors, the accessibility and the appearance of the information presented, as well as the contents thus communicated (Chapter 4).

The paucity of nationwide and Federal State-wide provisions for the organisation of voluntary return projects as well as the actor and project landscape, which has become differentiated along the different regional levels within this policy field, have made it necessary to consider the actors and projects individually in order to make reliable and universally applicable statements regarding the practice and the strategies of disseminating information in Germany. The process did not allow a census to be conducted of all governmental and non-governmental counselling centres and projects involved in voluntary return. In particular, local projects at municipal or district level could only be considered by way of example. By contrast, governmental and non-governmental international cooperation projects with German participation will be considered exhaustively as far as possible, as will most of the projects that have a nationwide orientation, and several supra-regional and Federal State-specific projects. A total of 50 return counselling centres, projects and networking platforms from all over Germany were included in the analysis. The great number of return projects and actors involved in voluntary return furthermore made it necessary to focus the analysis of the dissemination of information primarily on such information that was publicly available, thus including the websites of the actors and return assistance projects, but also information available elsewhere such as leaflets, brochures, annual reports and activity reports<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, it was possible to conduct several background interviews with a selection of the relevant actors involved in voluntary return, albeit the focus was on government experts or experts acting on behalf of governmental actors. However, it was also possible to speak with staff from the counselling centres from not-for-profit organisations and non-statutory welfare organisations. Moreover, the results of available studies in voluntary return and irregular migration were consulted as further sources of information.

2 I would like to thank Anna Blumenthal for her extensive research work as part of her internship at the Research Centre of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees.

Chapter 5 will describe the example of the information strategy pursued by Berlin's 'Reintegration Assistance for Returnees to Vietnam' project in chronological order since its foundation in 2012. A few central challenges to the dissemination of information will be identified in conclusion (Chapter 6).

The present study aims to help create a better understanding of the practice of the dissemination of information regarding the possibilities of return assistance – especially with irregular migrants in mind. The study was conducted as part of the European Migration Network (EMN); it is being conducted simultaneously by all participating Member States and Norway, and will be edited into a comparative synthesis report at the end of this process.

## Sources consulted

A number of sources were consulted in gathering the data examined in this study regarding the number of irregular migrants and that of third-country nationals who left the country voluntarily as well as forcibly. Dita Vogel from Bremen University has kindly provided estimates on the volume of irregularly-staying third-country nationals in Germany. She is a network partner of the German National Contact Point of the EMN, and already supplied expertise for the EMN (together with Manuel Aßner) regarding the volume, development and structure of the irregular population in Germany in 2011 and 2012 (Vogel/Aßner 2011). The information on assisted voluntary return was provided by the International Organisation Migration (IOM) Germany. The data on forced returns are taken from Bundestag printed papers (*Bundestagsdrucksachen*). Further data were obtained by querying the Central Register of Foreigners (AZR) and obtained from other actors' publications.

## 2 Irregular migration and return

The individual reasons for an illegal stay are manifold: “They may have been living in Germany legally for some time, but then lose their residence status as a spouse, au pair, student or employee and nonetheless stay. They may have entered legally as tourists and found an occupation that enables them to live here illegally. They may have entered illegally and then remained in Germany either directly or after their asylum application has been turned down” (Vogel 2015). Furthermore, migration in general and irregular migration in particular are age selective. Younger people are more inclined to relocate, especially if they do not yet have any children of their own. Since an irregular stay entails greater risks, and younger people are less risk averse, the share of younger migrants among the total population of irregular migrants is probably even larger (Kovacheva 2010: 7 et seq.). Furthermore, and contrary to the popular belief that irregular migration is a predominantly male phenomenon, Vogel notes that men are only slightly over-prevalent within the group (Bickmeyer 2015). The share depends heavily on the respective job market sectors in which irregular migrants find employment. These can be highly gender selective in themselves, thus making it likely that the share of irregular migrants working in the respective sector is gender selective as well. Thus, women frequently work in childcare and geriatric care, as housekeepers or in the sex industry, whereas men are more frequently employed in for example construction (Kovacheva 2010: 8 et seq.).

### 2.1 A definition of irregular migration

The various reasons for an irregular stay already indicate that irregularly-staying third-country nationals can be classified according to different population and status groups. The EU Returns Directive (2008/115/EC) for instance defines “illegal stay” as “the presence on the territory of a Member State, of a third-country national who does not fulfil, or no longer fulfils the conditions of entry as set out in Article 5 of the Schengen Borders Code or other conditions for entry, stay

or residence in that Member State” (Article 3 No. 2). In accordance with the study specifications of the European Migration Network, this study will however distinguish between two groups of irregularly-staying third-country nationals: those who maintain contact with the authorities and those who do not do so, albeit the latter allows for two further groups to be identified, so that in the end one can distinguish between three groups of irregularly-staying third-country nationals:<sup>3</sup>

- **Irregular migrants whose status and place of residence are known to the authorities and who are therefore in contact with the authorities (registered persons who are obliged to leave the country).** Amongst others, this group includes failed applicants for international protection who live in Germany with temporary suspension of deportation status, who are in principle obliged to leave the country but whose deportation has been temporarily suspended for legal or factual reasons (section 60a of the German Residence Act [Aufenthaltsgesetz – AufenthG]), and who are subject to geographical residence restrictions with a fixed registered address. Furthermore, this group includes migrants who have been issued a return decision, in combination with reporting requirements, after expiration of their visa as an alternative to detention pending deportation, but who are appealing the decision and/or who are still within the time period allowed for voluntary departure.
- **Irregular migrants who do not maintain contact with the authorities.**
  - **Irregular migrants who were previously known to the authorities, but whose place of residence is no longer known to the au-**

<sup>3</sup> Directive 2008/115/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16 December 2008 on common standards and procedures in Member States for returning illegally staying third-country nationals.

**thorities (absconders).** This group includes: asylum-seekers who absconded in the course of the initial distribution among the initial reception centres that are responsible for them, failed applicants for international protection who have absconded following a negative decision on their application, former legal immigrants whose visa has expired (visa-overstayers) and whose place of residence is unknown to the authorities, and other migrants without permission to reside such as persons who have evaded an alternative to detention pending deportation and absconded.

- **Irregular migrants whose residence on the territory has never been known to the authorities (persons without prior contact to the authorities).** This group includes all those who entered or were trafficked to Germany without valid documents or without registering their residence with the authorities or ever having had contact with them (e.g. who have never been stopped by the police). Persons trafficked involuntarily or under false premises and exploited by forced prostitution whose place of residence is unknown to the authorities are thus classified in this group. There is a wide range of terms for designating this group of people. Among the most common are “persons without papers” (Huschke 2013), “undocumented” (Angenendt 2007: 10), “clandestine” (Vogel 2015), “persons without the necessary documentation” or “persons without residence status” (Anderson 2011: 173; Bommers/Wilmes 2007), “illegalised persons” (Fleischer 2007, Schreiber 2007) or “sans-papiers” (Mylius/Bornschlegel/Frewer 2011). Besides these, the terms “illegals” or “illegal immigrants” are commonly used, albeit the term is criticised especially when it is applied to the people themselves and not to the act of immigration or the unauthorised residence. The degrading connotations, according to which persons without prior contact with the authorities are guilty of a crime and are associated with crime, have been subject to particular criticism (for a critique of the term *inter alia* Neue Deutsche Medienmacher 2014: 20 et seq.; Schneider 2012: 20; Breyer 2011: 25; Angenendt 2007: 10 et seq.; Schönwälder et al. 2004: 6). The use of

the term “illegals” has become increasingly rare as a result of this criticism.<sup>4</sup>

Insofar as a distinction must be drawn between irregularly-staying absconders and irregularly-staying persons whose residence has never been known to the authorities, the term ‘absconder’ or ‘absconded third-country national’ will be used for the former and ‘person without prior contact with the authorities’ will be used for the latter. The term ‘irregular migrant’ will refer below to all three of the population and status groups mentioned above. In doing so, care will be taken to distinguish between the three population groups of irregular migrants whenever possible. This applies especially when statements can be made regarding absconders and persons without prior contact with the authorities.

## 2.2 Scale of irregular migration

There are no reliable data on the scale of the irregular migrants in Germany. It is in the nature of things that authorities have no information regarding those persons without prior contact with the authorities or who have absconded, or that such information is imprecise. Data on irregular migrants are therefore based on estimates and projections with reference, for example, to the number of irregular migrants who were arrested for a criminal offence in relation to other arrests. In the case of absconders, while the act of absconding itself is generally documented (in individual cases by the foreigners authorities, and centrally by the Central Register of Foreigners), it cannot be reliably determined whether the person has absconded intentionally and permanently within Germany or whether, for example, he or she has left the country without cancelling his or her registration, and is no longer in Germany. However, verified data can be provided on the number of third-country nationals who are obliged to leave the country as well as on the number of those who returned via AVR(R) or who were returned by force.

For some years, the CLANDESTINO-project has been undertaking a qualified and methodically sound

<sup>4</sup> One of the largest news agencies in the world, Associated Press (AP), announced in 2013 that it would refrain from using the term “illegal immigrant” in its reports in the future (Monroy 2013).



estimate of the number of irregular third-country nationals in Germany (Vogel/Kovacheva 2008). However, these estimates do not permit a distinction to be drawn between persons without prior contact to the authorities and those who have absconded (Vogel 2015; Vogel/Aßner 2011). Thus, they are unable to determine in their calculations “whether the hidden existence was the result of an illegal entry, of staying on after expiration of a regular residence permit (over-stayers), or of absconding after having an extension of their right of residence turned down or their right of residence revoked” (Vogel/Aßner 2011: 6). It is however certain that registered persons under an obligation to leave were not considered.

### 2.2.1 Irregularly-staying third-country nationals (persons without prior contact with the authorities and absconders)

According to the estimates of Vogel, there were at least 180,000 and at most 520,000 third-country nationals staying irregularly in Germany in 2014. This corresponds to an increase of 13 to 17 percent over the previous year (2012: 160,000–443,000 persons). However, after a prolonged decrease over the years since 2010, a continuously-rising number of absconders and third-country nationals without prior contact with the authorities is to be expected (cf. Table 1).<sup>5</sup>

5 The estimate is based on the following calculations: “Data on suspects with the status ‘illegal’ from the police crime statistics are compared with German (ceiling) and non-German regular suspects (lowest value), and the irregular population is estimated by a simple multiplication with the respective population group ( $A/B \times D = C$ ) (Diakonisches Werk Hamburg 2009, pp. 62 et seqq.). In this context, the prime assumption regarding the estimation of the ceiling is that irregular migrants are overrepresented in the police crime statistics in relation to Germans. This is traced to structural differences that imply a higher crime rate and/or a greater probability of being stopped by the police: smaller shares of elderly persons and small children, larger shares of irregular migrants in cities, larger shares of persons who deviate from stereotypes about the majority of the German population. These structural differences are less marked in comparison to the foreign population. It is assumed here that behavioural factors lead to clandestine irregulars being underrepresented among suspects in comparison to the population. Qualitative studies point out that clandestine irregular migrants avoid contact with the police and committing crimes because they must additionally expect to be sanctioned with expulsion and deportation every time they commit a crime” (Vogel/Aßner 2011: 17).

While no information can be given with regard to irregular migrants without prior contact with the authorities, there are two sources of data on absconded third-country nationals that can be used for an approximation: those listed in the Central Register of Foreigners under ‘address unknown’, and the “travelers’ atrophy statistics” (*Reiseschwund-Statistik*) in the context of the initial distribution of asylum-seekers among reception centres (*Erstverteilung von Asylbewerhenden – EASY*). The Central Register of Foreigners registers all foreign nationals resident in Germany who have moved to an unknown address – i.e. migrants whose whereabouts became unknown to the authorities after a certain point in time and whom the authorities were unable to contact. This also includes persons who complied with their obligation to leave the country voluntarily but who either missed to hand in the border-crossing certificate (*Grenzübertrittsbescheinigung*) or who stayed within the Schengen borders but outside Germany. In both cases the competent foreigners authority is missing valid information about the actual departure, although the person actually left the country. This concerns not only third-country nationals with uncertain status regarding their right of residence, but also those with secure residence status (e.g. settlement permit) who have moved to an unknown address. It cannot be determined from the Central Register of Foreigners data whether the persons who held a residence permit and moved to an unknown address were on the verge of having their residence permits revoked, or if these were close to expiring. Thus, no statement can be made as to whether the imminent prospect of losing the residence permit led to the person absconding or moving to an unknown address without official notification of departure. It therefore appears sensible to process these data separately: one category accommodating all status groups, including those with a secure residence status, and one only recording persons whose residence status is precarious – in this case those without a residence permit or permission to stay for processing the asylum application (*Aufenthaltsgestattung*). However, it also cannot be said with certainty with regard to the latter that, when they moved to an unknown address, these persons consciously and permanently opted for an illegal status or whether they may for example have left Germany for another (European) country without notifying the authorities of their departure. The data therefore allow for only very limited statements on absconders permanently living in Germany.

**Table 1: Irregularly-staying third-country nationals in Germany (absconders and persons without prior contact with the authorities; estimates for 2010-2014)**

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Irregularly-staying third-country nationals (absconders and persons without prior contact with the authorities)</b>	136,000-337,000	139,000-381,000	151,000-414,000	160,000-443,000	180,000-520,000

Source: Vogel 2015; Vogel/Aßner 2011.

Furthermore, it is important to consider with regard to these data that they cover third-country nationals who were registered as having moved to an unknown address in the respective year (2010-2014), and whose address was still unknown by the cut-off date of 30 April 2015. If a person was registered as having moved to an unknown address in 2010 and came to the attention of the authorities once again in 2013, this person no longer counts as having moved to an unknown address. It is therefore only possible to make limited statements regarding trends over several years since it is in the nature of things that there is an increased probability that a person will come to the attention of the authorities, and the registration in the Central Register of Foreigners is changed, over the years.

If one assumes that the share of absconders among all persons who moved to an unknown address remains the same, the data show an increase, and the data for 2010-2014 paint a similar picture (cf. Table 2): After the number of persons who moved to an unknown address initially declined slightly from 2010 to 2011, it has been rising continually since then. Accordingly, 29,438 third-country nationals with previously precarious residence status from 2014 were still registered on 30 April 2014 as having moved to an unknown address (total of 49,465 third-country nationals). The considerable increase over the previous year cannot however be explained solely with the re-emergence of persons who had moved to an unknown address from the

previous years, but can rather be traced to the rising number of asylum-seekers, and thus of people with temporary permission to reside.<sup>6</sup>

Besides the data provided by the Central Register of Foreigners, specific data on absconded asylum-seekers can be found in the 'travellers' atrophy statistics' maintained by the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees. The statistics include all those asylum-seekers who did not contact the Federal States' reception centre responsible for them at their destination in the course of their initial distribution.<sup>7</sup> As with the Central Register of Foreigners data, it is important to consider when interpreting the data that they ultimately "allow no conclusions to be drawn with regard to permanently irregularly-staying persons in Germany since it is likely that for a number of the absconded persons Germany serves as a transit country on the way to another EU Member State. After an initial apprehension in Germany, they use the EASY distribution phase

6 "The BAMF grants permission to reside to asylum applicants whose asylum procedure is still pending. This entitles them to live and, under certain circumstances, work in Germany until the conclusion of the asylum procedure, that is until a decision has been reached regarding the asylum application" (BAMF 2015 et seq.: 2).

7 The initial distribution among the Federal Länder takes place according to the 'Königstein Key' and with the help of the EASY electronic distribution system (BAMF 2015c: 14).

**Table 2: Number of persons who moved to an unknown address as an indicator of absconded third-country nationals (2010-2014)**

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Third-country nationals who moved to an unknown address (all types of residence status; not incl. deportations, removals and refusals of entry)</b>	27,722	24,728	27,476	30,974	49,465
<b>Third-country nationals who moved to an unknown address (only persons with permission to stay for processing the asylum application or with no right of residence; not incl. deportations, removals and refusals of entry)</b>	12,019	11,838	14,356	16,602	29,438

Source: Central Register of Foreigners, cut-off date 30 April 2015.

**Table 3: Asylum-seekers who absconded in the course of the initial distribution (2010-2014)**

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>EASY distribution decisions (total)</b>	42,260	47,297	68,282	118,853	238,676
<b>Persons who failed to comply with the distribution decision (travellers' atrophy)</b>	2,595	2,689	4,175	4,897	17,470
<b>Share in %</b>	6.1	5.7	6.1	4.1	7.3

Sources: BAMF/EMN 2014; BAMF 2011: 1; 2013b: 5.

to reach their actual destination country" (BAMF/EMN 2015). Then again, another group of absconders is likely to remain in Germany, accepting life with an illegal status, and to settle especially in big German cities where large communities from their country of origin live and where they can fall back on existing social structures, these being particularly important for those living with an illegal status (Schneider 2012: 96).

17,470 out of 238,676 persons failed to contact the reception centre of the Federal State allotted to them in 2014. In comparison to the previous year, the EASY distribution decisions thus doubled while the number of absconders more than tripled (cf. Table 3).

The rapid increase thus correlates directly with the strong year-on-year increase in the number of asylum-seekers as such in 2014, so that the share of absconders remained roughly constant over the years at 6-7 % (2014: 7.3 %), with the exception of 2013 (4.1 %).

## 2.2.2 Third-country nationals obliged to leave the country

Unlike with the estimates on the size of the irregular population or the data on the number of third-country nationals who have absconded, which should be

read with caution as regards their validity, the Central Register of Foreigners contains reliable data on registered and still-resident third-country nationals who are obliged to leave the country. According to this source, there were a total of 142,281 third-country nationals who were obliged to leave the country living in Germany on the reference date of 31 December 2014 (sections 57 et seqq. of the Residence Act), 110,472 of whom were in possession of temporary suspension of deportation status, to whom an impediment to deportation applied (cf. Table 4).

Compared to the previous year, the number of third-country nationals who were obliged to leave the country rose by a total of almost 19 % in 2014, whilst the number of persons with temporary suspension of deportation status increased by 21 %. The increase is the direct result of the considerable rise in the number of asylum-seekers – especially during the last two years. Thus, the number of registered persons obliged to leave the country also rose by a total of seven percent – and of eight percent among those with temporary suspension of deportation status – between 2012 and 2013. The number had remained more or less constant in previous years, being between 110,538 and 112,615 third-country nationals in total, and that of persons with temporary suspension of deportation status was between 84,147 and 86,598.

**Table 4: Third-country nationals obliged to leave the country with and without temporary suspension of deportation status (2010-2014)**

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
<b>Third-Country nationals obliged to leave the country in accordance with sections 57 et seqq. of the Residence Act (of whom with temporary suspension of deportation status)</b>	112,615 (86.598)	110.538 (86.524)	111.558 (84.147)	119.636 (91.271)	142.281 (110.472)

Source: Central Register of Foreigners, cut-off date 31 December in each case.

### 2.3 Voluntary return and forced return

As a matter of principle, voluntary return takes precedence over forced return. This precedence has its basis in national law (section 58 subs. 1 of the Residence Act), as well as in the recitals of the EU in Article 7 of the EU return directive:

“Where there are no reasons to believe that this would undermine the purpose of a return procedure, voluntary return should be preferred over forced return and a period for voluntary departure should be granted. An extension of the period for voluntary departure should be provided for when considered necessary because of the specific circumstances of an individual case. In order to promote voluntary return, Member States should provide for enhanced return assistance and counselling and make best use of the relevant funding possibilities offered under the European Return Fund” (No. 10 of Directive 2008/115/EC).

The most comprehensive assisted voluntary return programme in Germany in quantitative terms is the REAG/GARP programme, a joint programme of the Federal Government and the Federal States<sup>8</sup>. “The programme offers to meet transport costs and to pay lump-sum financial travel benefits via the REAG component (Reintegration and Emigration Programme for Asylum-Seekers in Germany); the GARP component (Government Assisted Repatriation Programme) offers initial reintegration assistance for people from states that are particularly significant for Germany in terms of migration policy. The amount of initial assistance depends on the country of origin” (Schneider/Kreienbrink 2010: 13). REAG was established back in 1979, and was supplemented by the GARP programme in

1989. It is run by IOM on behalf of the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the responsible ministries of the Federal States, who jointly manage the programme. The programme funds such things as transport costs, financial travel benefits and financial reintegration assistance (for individual details on the amounts of benefits paid, cf. Appendix 3; IOM 2015b). Furthermore, the authorities or non-governmental organisations responsible for processing the applications for voluntary return assistance, which file the application together with potential voluntary returnees, receive advice as part of the programme. With the exception of nationals from certain countries of origin<sup>9</sup>, the following groups of people can claim benefits from this programme: irregular migrants, asylum applicants, third-country nationals within the Dublin Procedure, persons who were granted residence in accordance with international law, for humanitarian reasons or for political reasons; rejected asylum-seekers, victims of forced prostitution or human trafficking as well as foreign nationals insofar as they are eligible for benefits under section 1 of the Asylum-Seekers’ Benefits Act (*Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz – AsylbLG*) (IOM 2015b: 1; BAMF 2015a: 4). More than 570,000 persons have left voluntarily with the assistance of REAG/GARP since the programme was established (IOM 2015c: 13).

8 A wide range of further governmental and non-governmental return assistance programmes and reintegration projects exist besides REAG/GARP at European, nationwide, Land and municipal level. Some of these offer assistance that goes beyond the scope of REAG/GARP, for instance tailored to the needs of certain groups (including groups that are in need of protection) or to special conditions relating to the target destination countries (cf. list of players in Chapter 4.1 and on funding Chapter 4.1.4).

9 Nationals from “safe third countries” or European third countries, i.e. non-EU States from which visa-free immigration to Germany is possible, and whose nationals entered Germany after the beginning of the respective visa exemption, only receive travel expenses, but no initial aid or additional financial travel benefits (IOM 2014: 1). “This applies in particular to nationals from the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, as well as those from Montenegro and Serbia (visa exemption since 19 December 2009) and from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Albania (visa exemption since 15 December 2010) – vWEB states (visa-exempt countries of the Western Balkans)” (IOM 2014: 1). The Federal Government and the Federal States decided in spring 2015 that only transport costs would be granted, and that there would be neither financial travel benefits nor initial aid for Kosovar nationals who entered Germany after 31 December 2014 (BAMF 2015a: 4). Exceptions to these stipulations are made for victims of human trafficking, who may receive assistance through the REAG/GARP programme even if they come from EU Member States or from visa-exempt European third countries. Furthermore, a person may only receive assistance through the REAG/GARP programme once.

**Table 5: Total number of persons who left voluntarily within REAG/GARP (2010-2014)**

Financial REAG/GARP assistance granted	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Transport costs, financial travel benefits, and/or initial aid	4,480	6,319	7,546	10,251	13,574

Source: IOM.

### 2.3.1 The extent of voluntary return under REAG/GARP

The following data on voluntary return relate exclusively to persons who left as part of REAG/GARP. Voluntary returnees who left via an alternative return project without REAG/GARP benefits were not included.<sup>10</sup> Nothing can be said in terms of numbers about the total population of irregularly-staying third-country nationals who left voluntarily with or without benefits. The existing data on persons obliged to leave the country who actually left within the period allowed for departure cannot be broken down according to whether the person left with or without receiving assistance benefits. Furthermore, there are no data on the total number of persons who returned voluntarily as part of a return project. As regards the latter, there is still no central registry to collect and merge the data from all nationwide and Federal State-wide, municipal and target group-specific return programmes.

The number of all persons who returned to their countries of origin between 2010 and 2014 as part of REAG/GARP has been rising successively over the past five years (cf. Table 5). While a total of 4,480 persons received AVR(R) packages for their return through REAG/GARP (transport costs, financial travel benefits, and/or initial aid) in 2010, the figure more than tripled in 2014 (13,574 persons).

Irregularly-staying third-country nationals are not registered separately under REAG/GARP and in the statistics. The data in Table 6 are therefore an approximation of the number of persons whose residence can be expected to be irregular. This group includes third-country nationals whose deportation has been temporarily suspended in accordance with section 60a of the Residence Act, and whose obligation to leave the country is enforceable, even if a deportation order is not yet or is no longer enforceable. Further more, the group includes third-country nationals who filed a

**Table 6: Irregularly-staying third-country nationals\* who left voluntarily as part of REAG/GARP (2010-2014)**

Financial REAG/GARP assistance granted (AVR packages)	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Transportation only	407	2,908	2,025	5,610	7,226
Transport costs and financial travel benefits	784	310	347	453	476
Transport costs, financial travel benefits and initial aid	2,254	1,798	1,591	1,956	2,762
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,445</b>	<b>5,016</b>	<b>3,963</b>	<b>8,019</b>	<b>10,464</b>

\* cf. the description in the text for those status and population groups that are categorised as 'irregularly-staying third-country nationals' in this table.

Source: IOM.

10 However, the numerous return programmes and reintegration projects are mixed-funded programmes which in turn apply for travel costs for some of the returnees via REAG/GARP, while further benefits are funded by other means (e.g. reintegration benefits, skill-building measures, etc.). Thus, the REAG/GARP statistics also include a share of those persons who depart with the help of other assistance programmes. Nonetheless, explicitly even those persons receive assistance through the numerous return programmes who could not be assisted through REAG/GARP and thus do not feature in the statistics (Regierungspräsidium Karlsruhe 2013: 4).

follow-up application in accordance with section 71 of the Asylum Procedure Act (AsylVfG) or a second application in accordance with section 71a of the Asylum Procedure Act (only those applicants for asylum are registered here who had already been rejected once more) as well as rejected applicants for asylum who were in possession of permission to reside at the time of application. All persons were however in possession of at least a border crossing certificate (*Grenzübertritts-*

**Table 7: Deportations and removals of third-country nationals (2010-2014)**

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Third-country nationals deported or removed after having been given a departure order (deportations and removals)	15,052	12,185	11,098	13,645	12,844

Sources: Deutscher Bundestag 2015; 2014b; 2013a; 2012; 2011.

*bescheinigung – GÜP*) at the time of departure, and were thus known to the German authorities at least for the return process.

Irregularly-staying third-country nationals thus accounted for approximately two-thirds of all returnees participating in REAG/GARP in 2014, albeit 70 % of them received only transport costs and no further benefits as part of REAG/GARP (cf. Table 6). This was primarily due to additional countries of origin being defined as ‘safe countries of origin’ and the consequent exclusion of groups from these countries from further assistance benefits. This has particularly affected persons from the Western Balkans in the past years, who are generally only entitled to financial travel assistance and initial aid if they had already entered Germany before the date of the visa exemption.<sup>11</sup>

A total of 3,238 irregularly-staying third-country nationals received financial travel benefits and/or initial aid (AVR packages) in 2014, which was at about the same level as in 2010 (3,038 departures) but constituted an increase of roughly one-third in comparison to 2011-2013, when between 1,938 (2012) and 2,409 (2013) irregularly-staying third-country nationals received these benefits. A greater difference by far can however be observed among the departures as part of REAG/GARP, where only the transport costs were financed. Their number rose many times over in the five-year period, from 407 departures in 2010 to 7,226 departures in 2014 with transport costs only.

Statements at national level are difficult to make as regards the number of irregularly-staying third-country nationals who received transport benefits, financial travel benefits or initial aid for their return or departure independent of REAG/GARP between 2010 and 2014, e.g. because they had already left as part of

REAG/GARP once before, or because they were not eligible for AVR(R) packages as part of the programme, or for other reasons, but were given the possibility of assisted voluntary return in the respective Federal State or district via other voluntary assistance guidelines or programmes. However, a high four-figure number of persons can be expected to have returned or departed to their countries of origin or third countries independently of REAG/GARP every year in recent years with AVR(R) packages from the Federal States and municipalities (on assistance outside of REAG/GARP in the individual Federal States see, inter alia: Innenministerium Baden Württemberg 2008: 1 et seq., MIFKJF 2014: 2, Niedersächsisches Ministerium für Inneres und Sport 2014: 2).

### 2.3.2 Scale of forced return (deportations and removals)

The competent authorities have a number of means at their disposal to implement coercive measures in order to enforce an obligation to leave the country. Under certain conditions they can, for example, threaten and order removal or deportation. Restrictions of liberty and, as a last resort, the actual deprivation of liberty, can be imposed by judicial order in order to ensure the implementation. Custody awaiting deportation may however not be imposed “if the purpose of the custody can be achieved by other, less severe means which are also sufficient” (section 62 subs. 1, sentence 1, of the Residence Act).

*Removals and deportations* will be considered below with regard to forced returns. By contrast, *refusals of entry* at the border were not integrated as they do not represent residence-terminating but rather residence-preventing measures (Hailbronner 2014: para. 1088, Dienelt 2011: § 57 *AufenthG* paras. 2 and 3). The number of forced repatriations has oscillated over the past five years between the peak value of 15,052 third-country nationals in 2010, a low of

<sup>11</sup> Especially irregular migrants from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia and Serbia.

11,098 third-country nationals in 2012, and 12,844 third-country nationals who were deported or returned in 2014 (cf. Table 7).

When comparing assisted voluntary returns and forced returns of third-country nationals, one can hence observe a contrary trend over the past five years. While the number of removed and deported third-country nationals decreased by about 15 % between 2010 and 2014 (from 15,052 to 12,844 persons), the number of irregularly-staying third-country nationals who returned via AVR packages as part of REAG/GARP more than tripled from 3,445 to 10,464. While still more than four times as many third-country nationals were removed or deported in 2010 than returned via AVR packages within REAG/GARP, almost as many irregularly-staying third-country nationals returned via AVR packages in the past year as were removed or deported (10,464 irregular third-country nationals left within REAG/GARP as compared to 12,844 who were removed or deported).



# 3 Legislation and policy on voluntary return and the dissemination of information on voluntary return

In contrast to the explicit and comprehensive legal stipulations regarding forced return<sup>12</sup>, there are only a small number of provisions of federal law regarding voluntary return. There is no legal entitlement to assisted voluntary return in the case of voluntary return. The dissemination of information on the possibilities of voluntary return for irregularly-staying third-country nationals receives only passing mention – if any at all – in the shape of a declaration of competence, or with reference to the stipulation that return counseling must be offered.

## 3.1 Provisions of federal law

At federal level, legal stipulations related to voluntary return concentrate primarily on determining the precedence of assisted voluntary return over forced return (section 58 subs. 1 of the Residence Act). With regard to persons who are obliged to leave the country, this implies in practice that the deadlines for both appealing the ruling that pronounced the obligation to leave as well as for returning voluntarily must have passed before a forced return may be conducted. As a matter of principle, persons obliged to leave the country must be given enough time to do so voluntarily and to prepare their departure accordingly (on the grounds for determining the deadlines and the necessary prepa-

rations for departure, cf.: Dienelt 2011: § 50 paras. 12 et seqq. of the Residence Act; also Article 7 § 2 of Directive 2008/115/EC). The obligation to leave typically follows a notice of deportation that is issued by the foreigners authorities, which in turn provides for a deadline of between seven and thirty days (section 59 of the Residence Act).

There are only a small number of legal stipulations concerning the dissemination of information on measures of voluntary return. The Act to Improve the Rights of Persons Entitled to International Protection and Foreign Workers (Gesetz zur Verbesserung der Rechte von international Schutzberechtigten und ausländischen Arbeitnehmern) took effect on 6 September 2013. The changes also affected, inter alia, section 75 No. 7 of the Residence Act, which determined the responsibility of the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees with regard to “projects to promote voluntary returns, and paying out funds approved under those schemes”. The legal amendments specified and expanded the area of responsibility of the BAMF, which is now defined as follows: “coordinating the programmes and taking part in projects to promote voluntary return, and paying out funds approved under those schemes” (section 75 No. 7 of the Residence Act). The amendments thus accounted for the fact, described above, that “actors in assisted voluntary return can be found not only at federal level, but also among the Federal States, municipalities, inter-governmental and non-governmental organisations” (Deutscher Bundestag 2013b: 15). The phrase “programmes to promote voluntary returns” refers to the REAG/GARP programme (Huber/Göbel-Zimmermann 2010 § 75 paras. 1 et seqq. of the Residence Act). Furthermore, a concrete connection to the Federal Office’s information provision activities is established and reference

12 Provisions of federal law are to be found especially in the Residence Act (*Aufenthaltsgesetz*), the corresponding administrative provision (General Administrative Regulation on the Residence Act (*AVwVAufenthG*) and the Act on Procedure in Family Matters and Non-Contentious Matters (*Gesetz über das Verfahren in Familiensachen und in den Angelegenheiten der freiwilligen Gerichtsbarkeit – FamFG*) (Schneider 2012a: 56 et seqq. and Grote 2014).



made to the Information Centre for Voluntary Return (ZIRF) that was established in the Federal Office in 2003: “Information on measures of return on the part of authorities, non-statutory welfare umbrella organisations, Churches, etc., is collected there and passed on, and the counselling tasks for those interested in returning are coordinated. The Office cooperates in this area, in particular with the IOM, as well as with the UNHCR<sup>13</sup>” (Clodius 2008 § 75 No. 12 of the Residence Act; on the legal amendments in 2013, see also Eichenhofer 2015: § 75 No. 13 of the Residence Act and Chapters 4.1.1 and 4.1.2 for details on the ZIRF).

The Asylum-Seekers Benefits Act (Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz – AsylbLG) generally allows for the dissemination of information in the shape of return counselling for foreign beneficiaries by the authorities responsible for the implementation of the Asylum-Seekers Benefits Act:

“When providing benefits under the present act, reference shall be made to the benefits provided by existing return and onward migration programmes which may be granted to beneficiaries; efforts shall be made in suitable cases to facilitate the taking up of such programmes” (section 11 subs. 1 of the Asylum-Seekers Benefits Act).<sup>14</sup>

This does not however imply an obligation to “actually enrol” in one of the programmes mentioned “so that no legal consequences regarding benefits may be drawn” (Coseriu 2009: § 23 Section 4 para. 14 of the German Social Code XII).

The Residence Act furthermore allows for the Federal States to establish “return centres” – which already exist for instance in Bavaria, Lower Saxony, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saxony-Anhalt and Schleswig-Hol-

stein<sup>15</sup> – as part of the territorial restriction of residence for foreigners who are enforceably obliged to leave the country. In this context, the return centres take on various tasks within the obligatory departure of the persons in question by becoming active at the interface between voluntary departure and forced return for the otherwise decentrally located foreigners authorities in the respective Federal State: “At such departure facilities, the willingness to leave the federal territory voluntarily should be promoted through support and counselling, and accessibility for authorities and courts and implementation of the departure procedure should be ensured” (section 61 subs. 2 of the Residence Act).

In the context of forced return, return counselling can furthermore offer an alternative to detention pending deportation. Accordingly, section 62 subs. 1, sentence 1, of the Residence Act provides that detention pending deportation is unlawful “if the purpose of the custody can be achieved by other, less severe means which are also sufficient”. Section 46 subs. 1 of the Residence Act and the General Administrative Regulation on the Residence Act specify such less severe means. In accordance with these provisions, the foreigners authorities of the Federal States, as well as the employees of the departure facilities in Bavaria, Brandenburg, Lower Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein<sup>16</sup>, may take measures to assist the departure. Six such measures (“administrative orders”), one of which provides for an obligation to take up return counselling, are listed in the General Administrative Regulation on the Residence Act concerning section 46 of the Residence Act (46.1.4.2 of the Regulation).

Due to the focus of this study on irregularly-staying third-country nationals, further mention will be

13 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

14 In this, the supplementing provisions in section 11 subs. 1 of the Asylum-Seekers Benefits Act repeat the provisions contained in section 23 subsection (4) of the German Social Code (*SGB XII*): “Foreigners to whom social assistance is granted shall be informed of the return and onward migration programmes relevant to them; efforts shall be made in suitable cases to facilitate the taking up of such programmes”.

15 Bavaria with the two Central Return Agencies, ZRS Southern Bavaria in Munich and ZRS Northern Bavaria in Würzburg, Lower Saxony with the Reception Authority in Braunschweig, Rhineland-Palatinate with the Shelter for Persons Obligated to Leave the Country in Trier, Saxony-Anhalt with the Central Departure Centre in Halberstadt as part of the Central Contact Point for Asylum-seekers, and Schleswig-Holstein with the Agency for Foreigners' Affairs in Neumünster.

16 With the authorisation of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, administrative orders may also be issued by the authorities charged with carrying out the police control of cross-border traffic (46.1.2 AVwVAufenthG).

made of neither the Act to Protect Emigrants<sup>17</sup>, nor of the “mobility counselling” offered by the Federal Employment Agency in accordance with section 7 of the German Return Assistance Act (*Rückkehrhilfegesetz – RückHG*), which as a matter of principle is open to all “foreigners willing to return”, but is relatively unknown with regard to persons obliged to leave the country and irregular migrants (Schneider/Kreienbrink 2010: 48).<sup>18</sup>

The legal provisions with regard to voluntary return are limited to these very general stipulations. There are no standardised Germany-wide guidelines or directives on the contents of the information to be provided in return counselling or the time when the dissemination of information is to take place. None-

theless, information is disseminated in a variety of ways, and with decades of experience in some cases. As a matter of course, the BAMF for example provides rejected asylum-seekers with a brochure about the possibilities of AVR(R) packages through REAG/GARP, special reintegration programmes and further contact and counselling opportunities (cf. original document in Appendix 3 and Chapter 4.1.2). Certain networking and education projects in the field of return counselling and non-statutory welfare umbrella organisations have developed their own quality standards and position papers to this end, and these serve as guidelines for their employees (IntegPlan 2014; Littmann 2007; Diakonie 2006; BAGFW 2006). The Coordination Agency for ‘Integrated Return Management’ of the Federal Government and the Federal States is currently working on a return counselling guideline as well. These guidelines and position papers however relate primarily to the information to be disseminated and less to the question of how to point out existing counselling offers to certain groups of people (e.g. persons without prior contact with the authorities or absconders) and what channels of communication can be used to this end.

### 3.2 Provisions of the Federal States

The stipulations of federal law with regard to voluntary return are supplemented, or in part specified, by ministerial decrees, grants guidelines or procedural requirements in certain Federal States. The legal provisions of the Federal States, too, always emphasise the precedence of voluntary return over forced return and point to the assistance opportunities that are available through REAG/GARP, as well as to the conditions for an extension of the deadline for departure in justified cases (Ministerium des Innern und für Kommunales des Landes Brandenburg 2011). Insofar as funds are furthermore allocated to return measures of the Federal State in the budget, it has been noted that REAG/GARP funds must be used first of all before funds of the Federal State itself can be drawn on. Besides this, Federal State-specific priorities in voluntary return assistance are mentioned (Innenministerium Baden-Württemberg 2008: 1 et seq.; MIFKJF 2014: 2; Niedersächsisches Ministerium für Inneres und Sport 2014: 2). As Schneider and Kreienbrink found in their 2010 survey of programmes and measures carried out by the authorities responsible for assisted voluntary

17 The Act to Protect Emigrants (*Gesetz zum Schutze der Auswanderer und Auswanderinnen – AuswSG*) in the version dated 12.03.2013 applies to German nationals who are interested in emigrating and would like to take up the offer of counselling with regard to the matter. “With this Act, the legislature aims to prevent the exploitation of a lack of knowledge regarding the countries of destination on the part of those willing to emigrate and to protect its citizens from dubious counselling” (BVA 2015). In this context, it is not permitted “to promote emigration on a commercial basis” (section 2 subs. 1 of the Act to Protect Emigrants). Welfare organisations as well as private individuals who wish to provide emigration counselling must seek a permit. The permit is granted by the Federal Office of Administration in accordance with section 3 subs. 1 of the Act to Protect Emigrants in conjunction with the Ordinance on Emigrant Counselling Permits (*Auswandererberatungserlaubnisverordnung – AuswErIV*). The operators of the welfare organisation counselling centres are the Raphaelswerk (RW) or the Diakonisches Werk (DW). Besides these, there are various private counselling centres. Although the Act to Protect Emigrants does not include legally-binding provisions for the return counselling of third-country nationals in Germany who are willing or obliged to leave the country, an overlap in counselling may be expected to occur at least among welfare organisation counselling centres that offer emigration counselling as well as return counselling and, especially, onward migration counselling (Raphaelswerk 2015: 8 et seqq.).

18 “(1) Foreigners who are willing to return shall be informed and advised on request of general conditions for return and of the possibilities for vocational integration, including the establishment of self-employment, in their home countries. (2) The advice shall be provided by the Federal Employment Agency under the specialist instruction of the Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs or by subordinate agencies not belonging to the Federal Government. (3) The costs incurred from the advisory work in terms of training and information for the counsellors, as well as the cost of coordination, shall be met by the Federal Government” (section 7 of the Return Assistance Act – *RückHG*).

return in the 16 Federal States there may be a variety of reasons why not all Federal States have further projects and/or legal regulations besides REAG/GARP:

“In some German Federal States, the number of local potential returnees is estimated to be too low (Brandenburg, Hesse, Western Pomerania, Saxony) or existing services such as REAG/GARP are considered sufficient (Brandenburg, Western Pomerania, Saxony); or budget constraints or other financial reasons prevent establishing separate programmes (Brandenburg, Western Pomerania, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt). Hesse also claims that return assistance programmes do not have sufficient social acceptance and that it is difficult to rally public support particularly for subsidised return assistance” (Schneider/Kreienbrink 2010: 48 et seq.).

Framework conditions have been specified in Lower Saxony and Rhineland-Palatinate as well as in other Federal States with regard to the dissemination of information on possibilities of voluntary return. Thus, more specific stipulations regarding the time of return counselling and the governmental actors responsible – in this case the foreigners authorities – are provided by a circular from the Lower Saxony Ministry of the Interior and Sport dated 23 September 2014 (ref.: 61-12231/3) regarding legal advice and procedural stipulations on the organisation and implementation of return and deportation enforcement, and on the request for detention pending deportation:

“It has become apparent in many cases that the persons concerned were not aware of an applicable obligation to leave and that for this reason they did not leave. Foreigners who are obliged to leave the country should therefore also be informed independently from the counselling offered by refugee social workers and organisations that offer return counselling by the foreigners authorities about the modalities of departure, return assistance and the consequences of not leaving voluntarily. A clarification of the departure arrangements should take place together with the persons concerned in good time before the obligation to leave becomes enforceable [...]. Information and counselling regarding the possibility of leaving voluntarily must be documented in written form and filed with the foreigners

records” (Niedersächsisches Ministerium für Inneres und Sport 2014: 2 et seq.).

In Rhineland-Palatinate, the Ministry of Integration, Family, Children, Youth and Women (MIFKJF) sent an electronic letter on 18 March 2014 to all districts and cities with district status to inform them of the continuation of the Federal States’ Return Initiative in 2014. In it the addressees were briefed on the fact that a total of 1,358,000 € had been approved for 2014 for the planning and implementation of municipal assisted voluntary return projects. Furthermore, it was announced that, with regard to the dissemination of information, a counselling office with the sole purpose of offering consultancy to the municipal return counselling centres will receive financing:

“In addition to this, the Federal State finances the Counselling Centre for the municipalities that will assist them in implementing the Federal State Return Initiative’, and has a wide range of information on national and international assisted voluntary return programmes or on the respective area of origin. I would therefore most emphatically direct your attention to the counselling centre of the Diakonisches Werk of the Trier and Simmern-Trarbach Evangelical Church districts, which will gladly answer your questions and establish contact with further projects serving to improve and simplify return planning. Furthermore, the Counselling Support Centre will continue in 2014 to offer all 36 municipalities the possibility to enter into a joint exchange between foreigners and social authorities, as well as with the Counselling Support Centre, in order to assess the potential for further developing existing assisted voluntary return programmes” (MIFKJF 2014: 2; on the work of the Counselling Centre, see Chapter 4.1.1).

The Federal State-specific legal stipulations furthermore often make reference to the implementation and budget guidelines of the Federal Ministry of the Interior on the European Funds, as they hitherto applied to the European Return Fund (RF) (Schneider/Kreienbrink 2010: 49 et seq.) and will apply in the future to the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) that was only recently set up and will receive further discussion in the following section.

### 3.3 Stipulations on the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund

The funding period of the European Return Fund (RF), the most important European funding instrument in return assistance, expired at the end of 2013. A great number of return counselling centres as well as return and reintegration projects in Germany were co-funded by the RF. The RF was replaced by the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund<sup>19</sup>, which will be funded from 2014 to 2020. The AMIF Regulation (Regulation 516/2014/EU) came into effect on 16 April 2014<sup>20</sup>, and was implemented in Germany through the Federal Ministry of the Interior's Guideline on the Granting of Funds in the Context of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund of 30 September 2014.

As regards funding, the AMIF defines three core points: Firstly, the "Common European Asylum System"; secondly, the "integration of third-country nationals and legal migration" and, thirdly, "return", albeit the last point essentially covers those areas that were previously covered by the RF. The provisions contained in the AMIF Regulation, as well as in the Federal Ministry of the Interior's guideline on points of funding in terms of content and the eligibility of individual measures for funding in return, also exert a structuring influence on the orientation of voluntary return projects with regard to content, since, in order to receive co-funding from the AMIF, they must operate within the Fund's eligibility framework.

According to the Federal Ministry of the Interior's Guideline, "measures for funding equitable and effective return strategies as a contribution to combating illegal immigration (Articles 11 through 13 of Regulation 516/2014/EU)" are eligible for funding if they focus on a specific group of people. This applies to:

- (a) "third-country nationals who have not yet received a final negative decision in relation

to their request to stay, their legal residence and/or international protection in the Federal Republic of Germany, and who may choose to make use of voluntary return;

- (b) third-country nationals enjoying the right to stay, legal residence and/or international protection within the meaning of Directive 2011/95/EU, or temporary protection within the meaning of Directive 2001/55/EC in the Federal Republic of Germany, and who have chosen to make use of voluntary return;
- (c) third-country nationals who are present in the Federal Republic of Germany and do not or no longer fulfil the conditions for entry and/or stay in a Member State, including those third-country nationals whose removal has been postponed in accordance with Article 9 and Article 14(1) of Directive 2008/115/EC" (section 2 subs. 3 of the Federal Ministry of the Interior's Guideline on the Granting of Funds in the Context of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund).

Accordingly, the three groups of irregular migrants defined at the beginning of this study (registered persons obliged to leave the country/in possession of temporary suspension of deportation status, absconders and persons without prior contact with the authorities) are among the target groups that are eligible for funding. The parenthetical note in section 2 subs. 3 of the Guideline, which refers to Articles 11 through 13 of the AMIF Directive, and thus the whole of Chapter four of the Directive entitled "Return", is relevant in terms of content for the orientation of measures that are eligible for funding. This establishes the provisions regarding measures for the accompaniment of the return procedure (section 11), measures of return (section 12) and practical cooperation as well as capacity-building measures (section 13). With regard to the focus of this study on the dissemination of information to irregularly-staying third-country nationals concerning the possibilities of voluntary return, three provisions deserve particular emphasis here:

- "actions to promote, develop and reinforce operational cooperation and information exchange between the return services and other authorities of Member States involved in return, including as regards cooperation with the consular authorities and immigration services of third countries and

19 Regulation (EU) No 516/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 16.04.2014 establishing the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, amending Council Decision 2008/381/EC and repealing Decisions No 573/2007/EC and No 575/2007/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council and Council Decision 2007/435/EC

20 The stipulations of the AMIF Regulation however apply retroactively from 01.01.2014.

joint return operations” (Article 13 (a) of Directive 516/2014/EU),

- “actions enhancing the capacity to develop effective and sustainable return policies, in particular by exchanging information on the situation in countries of return, best practices, sharing experiences and pooling resources between Member States” (Article 13 (c) of Directive 516/2014/EU), and
- “information measures and campaigns in third countries aimed at raising awareness of the appropriate legal channels for immigration and the risks of illegal immigration” (Article 13 (f) of Directive 516/2014/EU).

For Germany, the foci of funding are furthermore established and specified in the National AMIF Programme. With regard to the focus of this study, it notes for example that the return counselling structure that was hitherto funded by the RF will be “maintained and continually advanced” (BAMF 2015h: 16). Furthermore, the quality of return counselling is to be “improved through an increased development of standards and the expansion of educational opportunities” (ibid.). Besides numerous return and reintegration measures that are defined as eligible for funding, further details can also be found regarding the dissemination of information. Thus, the following projects, as well as others, receive priority funding:

- “return counselling regarding the situation in the countries of origin, including the collection and dissemination of information;
- skill-building measures for return counsellors/qualified personnel as well as for corresponding quality management and standard development” (BAMF 2015h: 17).

Among other things, approximately 600 public sector employees will receive training in return-related issues in order to implement the latter of these measures. A further focal point explicitly concerns public relations, albeit the following measures are to receive priority funding:

- “The preparation and publication of media suited for the target groups in question;
- measures informing the authorities dealing with returnees about funding opportunities;

- information about the precedence taken by voluntary return (while at the same time making it clear that the obligation to leave will otherwise continue to be implemented by force);
- information about assistance in reintegration measures” (BAMF 2015h: 18).

One can therefore expect further projects and measures to emerge in the years to come, directed at both return counselling and the dissemination of information to returnees as well as the exchange of information among the actors in return counselling and return projects.

## 4 Overall national approach to disseminating information on voluntary return

The framework provided by federal law and the provisions by the single Federal States shows little juridification and standardisation with regard to the dissemination of information on the possibilities of voluntary return, thus offering the actors involved in voluntary return considerable leeway when it comes to the manner in which they provide information. The following chapters document this leeway and assess which actors use which channels to provide what information.

Chapter 4.1 will begin by listing the governmental and non-governmental actors and detailing the role that they play in the dissemination of information. In this context, a detailed listing and a brief portrayal of the actors will contribute to a better understanding of the types of actors, their structures and their scope of action regarding counselling and the dissemination of information. It may be anticipated here that, although a distinction is made between governmental and non-governmental actors, some cases do not allow a sharp distinction to be drawn. Furthermore, the two types of actors cooperate closely; non-governmental counselling centres and assisted voluntary return projects are partly or entirely financed by the Government. Some non-governmental organisations are furthermore explicitly tasked by the Government. This can involve, for example, an obligation to report regularly to the responsible ministries on counselling activities and the departures taking place in the context of the return project. Some return counselling centres and projects thus represent a mix of the governmental and non-governmental actors.

The brief portrayal of the individual actors furthermore serves to classify the following assessment of information channels and the naming of individual actors as examples with regard to their scope of action and target groups. The description will take place in

the condensed form of a table, albeit the individual tables build on one another. After the individual actors have been named, their information-provision channels will be described (Chapter 4.2), as will the accessibility and presentation of these channels (Chapter 4.3), and the contents communicated by the different actors via the individual channels (Chapter 4.4).

It was not necessary to differentiate below according to whether individual counselling centres or return projects enable the dissemination of information to or participation in projects by irregularly-staying third-country nationals because this is generally the case and, for example, they explicitly belong to the group of people who are eligible for funding from the REAG/GARP programme. Rather, the research sought to determine whether irregularly-staying third-country nationals were explicitly excluded from being provided with information and participating in the programme. There was however no evidence of this among any of the actors considered. On the contrary, numerous return counselling centres and projects explicitly point out in their leaflets and on their websites that irregular migrants belong to the group of people who are eligible for funding – often with regard to persons in possession of temporary suspension of deportation status, but also to absconders and persons without prior contact with the authorities. It is however important to allow for differentiation concerning the consequences that return counselling may entail for the different status groups. Government actors such as the employees of the foreigners authorities or the social welfare offices are obliged to report irregular migrants when they present themselves at their agencies, whereas non-governmental actors may conduct open-ended counselling to the effect that the irregularly-staying third-country national may decide against departing and to continue living in illegality.



#### 4.1 Actors in the dissemination of information

There is great diversity in the scope of actors in the policy field of voluntary return. All actors provide information on the possibilities of voluntary return in one form or another. In this context, the distinction between governmental and non-governmental actors is an obvious distinction when considering the numerous actors and their approaches to the dissemination of information, albeit it is not the only one that is relevant. At least two further distinction criteria appear particularly relevant: The target group of the information provided, and the scope of action regarding the counselling and information on offer. Two or three types of actors can be distinguished with regard to the target group:

- governmental and non-governmental networking and exchange platforms that do not offer individual return counselling but rather guidance, further training and information for counselling centres, and
- governmental and non-governmental actors that counsel and inform returnees directly, albeit it is possible to distinguish further among these between general return counselling centres and specific return projects:
  - governmental and non-governmental actors who provide general return counselling and information, and
  - governmental and non-governmental actors who provide counselling and information as part of a separate return programme or reintegration project.

Ultimately, these three types of actors can be broken down further according to the scope of action regarding the services they provide: international, nationwide, Federal State-wide (also in the case of cooperation between two or more Federal States), and municipal. The scope of action defined by the actors themselves will be decisive for the analysis below. This distinction is important since, for example, people from all over Germany can access a counselling centre website, but the counselling services may perhaps only be targeted at persons from the district, city or Federal State in which the actor is located. Thus, for example, Solwodi has several contact points in four Federal States, but offers its services nationwide – but for a specific group of people who are in particular

need of protection<sup>21</sup>. The Raphaelswerk, on the other hand, is represented with counselling centres in nine Federal States but offers a single, plain website for all counselling centres, whereas the return counselling service of the Cologne branch of the Diakonie (Diakonie Cologne) has a single counselling centre for the entire Cologne area while offering the most comprehensive information on its website in comparison with the other actors on (voluntary) return for all groups of residents (cf. Chapter 4.3). Some actors explicitly concentrate on return counselling, whereas this represents only one service among many, especially when it comes to welfare. The number of counselling centres in Germany, the scope aspired to or the visibility of the services offered online ultimately do not allow any reliable statements to be made as to how many persons concerned made use of the counselling services on offer. Accordingly, the following presentation of the actors distinguishes between the three types of actors and projects, the reach of their activities and projects, and whether they are governmental or non-governmental actors (cf. Table 8).

<sup>21</sup> Women from developing countries and Central and Eastern European states who had become victims of human trafficking, violence, and/or forced prostitution.

**Table 8: Types of governmental and non-governmental actors disseminating information in voluntary return and their scope of action (2015)**

		International	Nationwide	Federal State-wide (also several Federal States)	Municipal
Networking and exchange platforms	governmental	inter alia CSI, CPEP, EMN REG	inter alia BeNIP, ZIRF, BLK IRM	inter alia IntegPlan*, IMAG 'Alternatives to detention pending deportation' ('Alternative Abschiebungshaft')	inter alia counselling office of the Diakonie Trier und Simmern-Trarbach in Rhineland-Palatinate*
	non-governmental	inter alia ERSO	ns	inter alia IntegPlan* (in cooperation with Micado Migration)	inter alia counselling office of the Diakonie Trier und Simmern-Trarbach in Rhineland-Palatinate*
Return counselling centres	governmental	IOM*	inter alia BAMF, ZIRF counselling, Federal Employment Agency	inter alia Ministries of the Federal States, Central Return Counselling Offices for Refugees*, IOM return counselling Berlin, LAB NI	inter alia foreigners authorities, social welfare offices, Social Services in the collective accommodation for asylum-seekers
	non-governmental	IOM*	inter alia Solwodi, Raphaelswerk, Caritas, Diakonie, AWO, DRK	inter alia Hamburg Refugee Centre, JADWIGA, Central Return Counselling Offices for Refugees*, Caritas, Raphaelswerk, Diakonie, AWO, DRK	inter alia GGUA Münster, Euro-Schulen Bitterfeld-Wolfen, Internationaler Bund – Kinder- und Jugendhilfzentrum Harz e.V., refugee counselling centres
Return programmes and reintegration projects	governmental	inter alia SIREADA*, TIA, RACOB, Targeted Initiative Georgia, ERIN	inter alia URA 2, REAG/GARP*, Reintegration Northern Iraq (IOM)*, 'Migration for development' (CIM)	inter alia IOM-Reintegration Assistance for Returnees to Vietnam and Kenya (Berlin)*, AVR(R) programmes of individual Federal States	inter alia Coming Home (greater Munich), QUARK (Schwäbisch Gmünd)
	non-governmental	inter alia RECEA (AWO Bremerhaven), SIREADA*	inter alia Solwodi, REAG/GARP*, Reintegration Northern Iraq (IOM)*	inter alia Hamburg – Ghana-Bridge, Kosovo project Nuremberg, IOM-Reintegration Assistance to Vietnam and Kenya (Berlin)*	ns

\* These actors or projects are either international organisations (e.g. IOM), inter-governmental actors or particularly close cooperations between governmental and non-governmental agencies, so that they were classified as both governmental and non-governmental.

Source: author's portrayal, last updated: May 2015, cf. Chapter 4.1.

#### 4.1.1 Networking and exchange platforms

No individual return counselling for migrants takes place on networking and exchange platforms for actors involved in voluntary return. Rather, they offer consultancy, skill-building measures and information for counselling centres. Above all, the platforms offer a space for exchange among relevant actors at the respective levels of action and with their project-specific focuses on different target groups and countries of origin in order to learn from one another's best practices and help improve the quality of the counselling and of the reintegration projects.

#### International networking and exchange platforms

##### Governmental

##### CSI – Common Support Initiative

This platform was established in 2013 in order to improve the exchange and cooperation between European states in voluntary return. The actors involved are authorities from nine European countries: Belgium (Fedasil), Germany (BAMF), Luxembourg (Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs [Ministère des Affaires étrangères et européennes]), Finland (Migri), the United Kingdom (Home Office), Switzerland (BFM), France



(OFII), the Netherlands (DT&V) and Norway (UDI). Furthermore, an exchange takes place with the European Migration Network Return Expert Group (EMN REG). The platform pursues three main goals: firstly, the exchange of information on voluntary return projects; secondly, technical support with the development and implementation of common instruments of project development, control and evaluation; thirdly, periodical exchange meetings on the level of the coordinating and implementing actors (Fedasil 2015).

*CPEP – Common Planning and Evaluation Platform (up to 2013)*

This networking platform was initiated by Belgium in 2010 and funded by the RF. Eleven EU Member States were involved: besides Germany, these are Belgium, Estonia, Finland, France, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, Hungary and the United Kingdom. The aim of the platform was to promote the “quality and coherence” of programmes associated with the European Return Fund on a national and trans-national level, especially with regard to “innovative and integrated return projects” in voluntary and forced return (Ibz, no date: 2; www.cpep.eu).

*EMN REG – European Migration Network Return Expert Group*

The Expert Group addresses measures of return and reintegration, and consists of representatives of (Member) States participating in the EMN (EU Member States including Norway, but excluding Denmark). The EMN REG aims to reinforce the exchange on examples of best practice in return and reintegration measures, and thereby to help develop sustainable return measures and practical problem-solving strategies for actors in return. It furthermore aims to collect statistical data on return and reintegration and to provide an overview of the return policies of the individual (Member) States. All in all, it seeks to contribute towards establishing a coherent practice in return and reintegration projects (COM 2014: 5 et seq.).

**Non-governmental**

*ERSO – European Reintegration Support Organisations*

This is an international NGO exchange platform working in return counselling and reintegration

assistance which has been in existence since 2007. The German actors that are part of the ERSO network are the Raphaelswerk and the non-profit private limited company Micado Migration gGmbH. International partners are: ACCEM (Spain), Caritas Austria, Caritas Europe, Caritas International Belgium, the Danish Refugee Council, France Terre d'Asile (France), Maatwerk bij Terugkeer (Netherlands) and Refugee Action (United Kingdom). The network provides opportunities for exchange between the actors on tried-and-tested approaches and experiences in the field of voluntary return and reintegration. The ERSO network furthermore organises conferences on questions regarding return such as the conference that was held in Essen on 17 May 2013 on “Measures of assisting reintegration in Togo, Cameroon and Senegal in cooperation with local partner organisations” (ERSO et al. 2013).

**Nationwide networking and exchange platforms**

**Governmental (selection of examples)**

*BeNIP – Network of authorities for international project work in the field of return and reintegration (2012-2014)*

The goal of this BAMF-managed project was to “improve cooperation between all authorities dealing with questions of return. By way of study trips to selected European countries, participants were given the opportunity to exchange experiences with European partner authorities and to get to know tried-and-tested practices which might be adopted”, and which might serve in the future as the basis for an international project work concept (Landeshauptstadt München – Sozialreferat 2015: 19). The focus here lay on networking governmental actors on different levels (Federal, Federal States, municipalities), as well as on cooperation and exchange between relevant EU Member States such as Belgium, France, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Sweden, Poland, Finland and Denmark. Study trips to the partner organisations were organised (BAMF 2013a: 20 et seq.).

*ZIRF – Information Centre for Voluntary Return:*

- *ZIRF – Coordinating return and improving the promotional services offered:* Since its establishment in 2003, the Information Centre has

been exerting a coordinating, informing and networking influence on the return counselling centres and return projects in Germany ([www.zirf.eu](http://www.zirf.eu)). To this end, ZIRF processes the information and materials available and makes them available to “authorities of the Federal Government, of the Federal States and municipalities (especially foreigners authorities and social welfare offices), as well as where appropriate international partners or other institutions involved, non-statutory welfare organisations, churches, and especially prospective returnees” in particular via its website, but also at events, through their e-mail mailing list and by post (BAMF 2014b).

- *ZIRF database*: The database publishes country-specific fact sheets for a selection of countries of origin from 2006 onwards (<https://milo.bamf.de/>). These are available in German and English, and generally also in a further language of the country in question. The information on the countries is gathered in the respective countries and edited on behalf of the BAMF/ZIRF by staff of the intergovernmental International Organisation for Migration. There were 29 country fact sheets available as of 28 April 2015.<sup>22</sup> The main topics which they present are medical care, the housing situation, the job market, social affairs, basic and further training opportunities and contact points for other organisations and relevant governmental authorities of the Federal States.

22 Afghanistan (English, Dari); Algeria (English, Arabic); Armenia (English, Armenian); Azerbaijan (English, Azerbaijani); Ethiopia (English, Amharic); Bosnia and Herzegovina (English, Bosnian); China (English, Chinese); Georgia (English, Georgian); Ghana (English); India (English, Hindi); Iraq (English, Arabic); Iran (English, Farsi); Congo (English, French); Kosovo (English, Albanian, Serbian); Lebanon (English, Arabic); Liberia (English); Morocco (English, Arabic); Montenegro (English, Serbian, Montenegrin); Nigeria (English); Pakistan (English, Urdu); Russia/Russian Federation (English, Russian); Serbia (English, Serbian); Sierra Leone (English); Sri Lanka (English, Sinhalese, Tamil); Syria (English, Arabic); Togo (English, French); Turkey (English, Turkish); Ukraine (English, Ukrainian); Vietnam (English, Vietnamese). (<http://www.bamf.de/DE/Rueckkehrfoerderung/Laenderinformation/Informationsblaetter/informationsblaetter-node.html> 28.04.2015).

#### *Coordination Agency for ‘Integrated Return Management’ of the Federal Government and the Federal States (BLK IRM)*

The BLK IRM hosted by the BAMF<sup>23</sup> was founded in late 2014. The participants are representatives of various agencies of the Federal States, the Federal Ministry of the Interior, the Federal Foreign Office and the headquarters of the Federal Police. The purpose of the Coordination Agency is to provide a framework in which to develop a strategy on more efficient assistance, the implementation and linking of voluntary return, reintegration and forced return – inter alia “for problem cases, especially Dublin Transfers” (BMI 2014), but also for the “identification of prioritised problem areas in the implementation of existing obligations to leave, the provision of practical assistance opportunities on the part of the acting authorities beyond the topics of procuring passports or passport substitutes and booking flights in Dublin Transfers, establishing authorities with specific focuses, means of sanctioning persons obliged to leave the country, voluntary return (e.g. return counselling) and developing common standards and practical directions for action (best practice)” (Landtag Nordrhein-Westfalen 2015: 2 et seq.; SPD 2015). In its first short report for the Permanent Conference of the Interior Ministers of the Federal States, which took place on 25–26 June 2015, the BLK IRM makes several recommendations which also concern the focus of this study. These recommendations include a “nationwide adoption of the developed standardised guidelines for return counselling”, the “legal anchoring of the promotion of voluntary return”, a “survey of existing activities on the federal, Federal State and municipal level” concerning reintegration programmes as well as “a highest possible centralisation, standardisation and networking” in many areas (BLK IRM 2015: 1).

23 The launch event of the sub-working parties and of the steering committee took place at the BAMF on 17.12.2014, followed since then by several more meetings at the same venue.

## **Federal State-wide networking and exchange platforms (including more than one Federal State)**

### **Governmental (selection of examples)**

*Interdepartmental Working Group 'Alternatives to detention pending deportation' (Schleswig-Holstein)*

In order to implement the mandate from the Coalition Agreement, the ruling parties SPD/SSW/BÜNDNIS 90/DIE GRÜNEN established the Interministerial Working Group in December 2012 with representatives from the departments affected, i.e. the Ministries of the Interior, of Justice and of Finance. Its goal was, among other things „to develop a concept for assisted voluntary return and a list of measures for the termination of the residence of foreigners enforceably obliged to leave the country whilst avoiding detention pending deportation“. In 2014, the IMAG published a report containing recommendations on alternatives to detention pending deportation, which included the reinforcement of voluntary return (Innenministerium Schleswig-Holstein 2014: 2).

### **Governmental and non-governmental (selection of examples)**

*IntegPlan - Integrated Return Planning*

IntegPlan is a cooperation network of various organisations and Federal States: Micado Migration gGmbH in cooperation with the Munich Office for Return Assistance (Coming Home) and the Federal States Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Bremen, Hesse, Lower Saxony, North Rhine-Westphalia and Saxony-Anhalt – but also with non-governmental return counselling centres and reintegration projects. As part of the project, further training is organised for the staff of counselling centres and return projects, and specialist conferences are held on the subject (inter alia on the legal framework conditions of assisted voluntary return, projects in countries of origin, country-specific training, but also the right to propose motions regarding the EU Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund). The creation of exchange and cooperation structures is also justified on the basis of EU stipulations on improving the quality of return counselling through networking (IntegPlan 2014, cf. Chapter 3.3 on AMIF). Its aim is to develop procedures

and methods of “integrated return counselling”, which was hitherto “ensured only in isolated cases”. The services on offer are therefore primarily aimed at return counselling centres of the participating Federal States and “via these at potential returnees, who are to be linked with counselling centres in selected countries of return”. The website furthermore offers an interactive map of Germany showing return counselling centres ([www.integplan.de](http://www.integplan.de)).

## **Municipal networking and exchange platforms**

### **Governmental and non-governmental (selection of examples)**

*Counselling Office of the Diakonie of the Trier and Simmern-Trarbach Protestant Church districts in Rhineland-Palatinate*

The Counselling Office supports the authorities dealing with return counselling in the 36 municipalities of the Federal State with the procurement of information and consultancy on questions regarding return projects and return organisation, but does not itself provide return counselling for persons obliged and/or willing to leave the country (MIFKJF 2014). The duties of the Counselling Office include case conferences, supervision, case management and support for local exchange meetings between the relevant actors (authorities, organisations, etc.). The Office furthermore provides information on the conditions regarding residence law (e.g. deadline for departures and possibilities of extension) that enable the person receiving consultancy to obtain information on return possibilities at their leisure, to make a decision and to implement this decision. Employees of the counselling centres can furthermore participate in information trips organised by the Counselling Office to individual countries of origin, as well as intercultural competence training and conferences. The Counselling Office informs the municipal counselling centres and foreigners authorities of events and news, using a newsletter, among other means ([www.ekkt.ekir.de/trier/2123.0.html](http://www.ekkt.ekir.de/trier/2123.0.html)).

#### 4.1.2 Return counselling centres

Besides the networking and exchange platforms, there are even larger numbers of actors who provide return counselling or other forms of information to migrants willing to return and/or obliged to leave the country, which cannot be assessed to their full extent in the course of this study. A focus of the following discussion lies on official information channels, that is on actors who regard the dissemination of information on the possibilities of voluntary return as one of their central tasks. Among these are approximately 600 foreigners authorities and roundabout 1,500 counselling centres of welfare organisations and non-governmental organisations (BAMF 2015h: 7). The numerous other actors that provide information on the possibilities of voluntary return via more informal, passive and/or indirect channels however also deserve mentioning. Likewise, one should note here the ministries of the Federal States and the websites of these and numerous other authorities that do not offer counselling themselves, but do provide information on their websites regarding existing voluntary return projects of the Federal States and the federal level. These usually do also inform on the range of benefits, the target groups and contacts as well as links to return counselling centres and projects.

#### Nationwide return counselling and dissemination of information

##### Governmental (selection of examples):

##### *Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF)*

As a standard procedure, the BAMF provides a four-page brochure for rejected asylum-seekers, informing them of the assistance available through REAG/GARP, special reintegration projects and additional contact and counselling opportunities. The document is sent out by post along with the asylum decision, and is available in 22 languages<sup>24</sup> (cf. Appendix 3). The brochure informs rejected asylum-seekers about the possibilities of leaving voluntarily and about

specific assisted return projects.<sup>25</sup> There is a short description of the target groups, the range of services and contacts pertaining to each project listed, as well as links to further information sources. The document closes by stipulating that there is no legal entitlement to the benefits provided by the assistance projects, and that these project benefits can only be offered once (BAMF 2015b: 4). The website of the BAMF furthermore offers a diversity of further information on individual return projects, numerous links to additional sources of information and counselling by phone ([www.bamf.de](http://www.bamf.de)).

##### *ZIRF Counselling*

Since 2006, the Information Centre for Voluntary Return (see above) has been offering individual return counselling in addition to its database and coordinating tasks. Persons interested in returning have the possibility to make individual queries via authorities entitled to handle enquiries regarding, inter alia, medical care, the job market, the housing situation, welfare issues, public administration and possibilities for basic and further training in the destination country (Schmidt-Fink 2009: 7). The answers to the approximately 200 queries received per year are then published anonymously in the ZIRF database so that others can access the information as well ([www.bamf.de/DE/Rueckkehrfoerderung](http://www.bamf.de/DE/Rueckkehrfoerderung)).

##### *Central Placement Office for Work Abroad and Specialist Workers (ZAV) of the Federal Employment Agency*

The Federal Employment Agency's International Personnel Service offers return counselling for migrants (who have lost their jobs) in questions of return integration and, here in particular, job market integration in the country of origin. For certain countries of origin, the International Personnel Service furthermore offers special

24 Albanian, Arabic, Armenian, Azerbaijani, Badini, Chinese, Dari, German, English, Farsi, French, Hindi, Northern Kurdish, Punjabi, Russian, Serbian, Central Kurdisch, Spanish, Turkish, Urdu, Vietnamese, Zazaki.

25 The brochure refers to, inter alia, REAG/GARP services, the Special Migrants Assistance Programme (SMAP), CIM 'Returning Specialists' return project in cooperation with the Central Placement Office for Work Abroad and Specialist Workers, further Federal State-specific programmes with reference to the ZIRF website and to further counselling centres run by the large independent welfare organisations (German Red Cross, the Diakonie and Caritas).

information, brochures and contacts on its website<sup>26</sup> (cf. also the CIM-programme 'Migration for Development').

#### **Non-governmental:**

Cf. counselling centres on Federal States level and Solwodi under nationwide reintegration projects.

### **Federal State-wide return counselling and dissemination of information**

#### **Governmental (selection of examples):**

##### *Lower Saxony Reception Authority (LAB NI)*

The Federal State Reception Authority is tasked with "instructing the persons accommodated in its facilities on existing return and onward migration projects and assisting them with the practicalities of the return to their countries of origin or their onward migration to a third country willing to receive them" (LAB NI 2015). Individual assistance may also be applied for by persons living at some distance from the office. The assistance service covers, among other things, information on the country of origin, financial aid, medical care, start-up aid, professional skill-building measures and the practical organisation of return (LAB NI 2014: 2).

#### **Governmental and non-governmental (selection of examples)**

##### *Central Return Counselling Offices for Refugees (ZRB) in Northern, Western, Eastern and Southern Bavaria*

The Central Return Counselling Offices spring from mergers between the welfare organisations AWO, Bavarian Red Cross, Caritas and the Diakonie Augsburg. Depending on the Central Return Counselling Office, they have merged into different consortia. The regional governments of Central Franconia, Lower Franconia and Swabia support the Central Return Counselling Offices with funds and administrative

personnel. The Central Return Counselling Offices are furthermore funded by the Free State of Bavaria, and since 1 January 2015 by the AMIF. Until 2014, they were also funded by the RF. They offer return counselling on all current return-related topics, and furthermore a variety of skill-building measures in Germany (e.g. solar cooker construction courses, forklift licences, sewing courses, etc.; ZRB Süd- und Westbayern 2014). A further project that was initiated as part of return counselling in Northern and Western Bavaria was the 'Return children' project, which prepares "return counselling materials especially designed for children and young people", including leaflets for parents (in German, English, Russian, Arabic and Azerbaijani), a dictionary, a storybook and a colouring book and a leaflet for teachers at schools. The Central Return Counselling Offices furthermore provide consultative advice to other authorities on questions of voluntary exits. The staff furthermore gives presentations on the work of the project at the foreigners authorities and at the social welfare offices of certain districts within its catchment area and the central return offices (ZRB Nordbayern: 13). Public relations are maintained, for example by means of radio features ([www.zrb-nordbayern.de](http://www.zrb-nordbayern.de) and [www.zrb-suedbayern.de](http://www.zrb-suedbayern.de)).

#### **Non-governmental (selection of examples):**

##### *Raphaelswerk*

This non-profit organisation is commissioned by the German Bishops' Conference to offer immigration as well as emigration counselling and return and onward migration counselling. It runs counselling centres in nine Federal States, where it offers, among other services, personal counselling on return and reintegration projects as well as financial and medical support; assistance in passport, customs and visa-related issues, departure organisation, and information on the country of origin. 665 "refugees" received return counselling in 2014, and 79 persons received onward migration counselling (Raphaelswerk 2015: 16). Counselling takes place independently of residence status. The Raphaelswerk furthermore runs a central German-language website with contact information and a map of Germany marking the location of counselling centres as

26 E.g. for Bosnia and Herzegovina: [www.arbeitsagentur.de/web/content/DE/service/Ueberuns/WeitereDienststellen/ZentraleAuslandsundFachvermittlung/Arbeit/Laenderinformationen/Detail/index.htm?dfContentId=L6019022DSTBAI531904](http://www.arbeitsagentur.de/web/content/DE/service/Ueberuns/WeitereDienststellen/ZentraleAuslandsundFachvermittlung/Arbeit/Laenderinformationen/Detail/index.htm?dfContentId=L6019022DSTBAI531904) (20.05.2015).

well as links to further information on return and onward migration ([www.raphaelswerk.de](http://www.raphaelswerk.de)).

#### *Caritas*

This non-profit organisation has established return counselling centres in several Federal States, such as Karlsruhe Caritas Return Counselling (Baden-Württemberg), whose assistance services include: return organisation, queries on the political and economic situation in the country of origin, counselling on support, housing and job opportunities, psychological and medical care, educational and professional conditions for children ([www.caritas-karlsruhe.de](http://www.caritas-karlsruhe.de); Caritas Erfurt: [www.dicverfurt.caritas.de](http://www.dicverfurt.caritas.de)). Through the NRW Return Counselling, Caritas and the Raphaelswerk furthermore offer professional skill-building opportunities (including IT training) for returnees, which they provide in cooperation with the following local actors: African Parents' Association (Afrikanischer Elternverein e.V.), IOM, Heimatgarten e.V., Pro Newtech e.V., ERSO, RWTH (University of Aachen), and with individual organisations in selected countries of origin: IMES (University of Rwanda), SOCABU (Burundi), Action Volontaire and Action Jeunesse (Senegal) (Caritas Aachen: [www.caritas-aachen.de](http://www.caritas-aachen.de)).

#### *Diakonie*

This non-profit organisation has established return counselling centres in numerous Federal States, such as the Return Counselling Centre of the Diakonisches Werk for Cologne and the Region (North Rhine-Westphalia), which covers the following points amongst others: the legal situation regarding residence in Germany, the situation in the country of origin, departure deadlines and arrangements, funding opportunities through return and reintegration projects, decision-making and the organisation of departures. Counselling is available in at least eleven languages.<sup>27</sup> Furthermore, the Diakonie Cologne has launched the website 'Counselling

and supporting voluntary return', which despite not having been updated since late 2012 continues to offer Germany's most comprehensive collection on the topics of (voluntary) return and onward migration to date (including in English). Amongst other things, the website offers advice on 'returning with children' and specific information on 22 countries<sup>28</sup>, questions on obtaining a passport, relocation and shipping, on possibilities of re-entry and on other topics besides ([www.projekt-auswege.kirche-koeln.de](http://www.projekt-auswege.kirche-koeln.de)).

#### *Workers' Welfare Association (Arbeiterwohlfahrt – AWO)*

This non-profit organisation has established return counselling centres in numerous Federal States, such as the AWO Return Counselling 'NEW LIFE' in Hildesheim and Hanover (Lower Saxony), offering among other services individual return counselling for refugees and migrants in Lower Saxony, establishing contacts with medical and psycho-social specialists in the destination country and helping with finding accommodation. Nationwide assistance with the targeted search for training and employment opportunities is provided for migrants and refugees from Turkey ([www.awo-hi.de](http://www.awo-hi.de)). Furthermore, comprehensive assistance is offered as part of an AWO-funded RECEA reintegration project for Armenian nationals (cf. discussion on RECEA in Chapter 4.1.3).

#### *German Red Cross (DRK)*

This non-profit organisation has established return counselling centres in numerous Federal States, such as the DRK Hamm (North Rhine-Westphalia). Counselling is offered on residence and return perspectives, the situation in the country of origin, training and start-up funding, applying for return assistance, administrative issues, obtaining travel documents, organising departure and pension claims ([www.drk-hamm.de](http://www.drk-hamm.de)).

<sup>27</sup> Range of languages spoken at the Diakonie Köln return counselling centre: Arabic, German, English, French, Kikuyu, Swahili, Northern Kurdish, Polish, Russian, Spanish and Turkish.

<sup>28</sup> Information is available on the following countries: Albania, Armenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Cameroon, Croatia, Ecuador, Georgia, Ghana, Iraq, Kosovo, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Mozambique, Nigeria, Pakistan, Russian Federation, Serbia, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Turkey and Ukraine.



### *Hamburg Refugee Centre*

The central information and counselling centre (Zentrale Information und Beratung für Flüchtlinge gGmbH) was founded in 2006 as a joint venture between DRK, AWO and Caritas Hamburg. It covers return counselling and the typical services on behalf of the city of Hamburg (see above on the individual welfare organisations). A focus lies on 'integrated return counselling', which according to the 'Guidelines for Refugee Counselling' differs in Hamburg from targeted return counselling in which a return is "the sole or central content of counselling" insofar as it is "a component of comprehensive living situation-orientated counselling on prospects" (Littmann 2007: 20). The counselling provided by the Refugee Centre is furthermore directed at particularly vulnerable persons such as single parents, senior citizens, the ill or persons with disabilities. Website contents and leaflets are available in English, German, Farsi, Arabic, French and Russian. Personal counselling can be provided in 16 languages<sup>29</sup> ([www.fz-hh.de](http://www.fz-hh.de)).

### *JADWIGA*

These are three Bavarian specialist counselling centres in Hof, Munich and Nuremberg sponsored by the Association for International Youth Work and IN VIA Catholic Social Work with Girls. They "advise and support women and girls who are victims of international human trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation or labour exploitation" (JADWIGA 2013). The women concerned also receive counselling on return-related questions and are given assistance in returning (e.g. support when applying for return assistance). The counselling centres receive funding from the Bavarian State Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, Family and Women and the RF, besides numerous other sponsors. The project website is only available in German. Personal counselling is however also facilitated in the native language of the person concerned ([www.jadwiga-online.de](http://www.jadwiga-online.de)).

### **Municipal return counselling and dissemination of information (districts and cities with district status)**

#### **Governmental (selection of examples):**

##### *Foreigners authorities and welfare offices*

Foreigners authorities in the districts and cities with district status are responsible for questions pertaining to residence law and monitoring the departure in the event of an obligation to leave. In this context, the approximately 600 foreigners authorities offer the persons concerned information on the possibilities of voluntary return and notify them about a potentially forced return, the enforcement of which they are authorised to impose. In certain Federal States, e.g. Lower Saxony, the dissemination of information by the foreigners authorities regarding the possibilities of voluntary return is mandated by decree (cf. Chapter 3.2 and Niedersächsisches Ministerium für Inneres und Sport 2014: 2). Furthermore, the foreigners authorities in the individual Federal States, for instance in Brandenburg, are tasked with examining and forwarding benefit applications relating to REAG/GARP (Ministerium des Innern und für Kommunales des Landes Brandenburg 2011). The welfare offices, which often also maintain their own counselling centres, can take applications for assistance and offer support in the application process (Regierungspräsidium Kassel 2015).

##### *Social Service in collective accommodation for asylum-seekers*

Besides providing counselling on the residence in Germany, social workers employed in collective accommodations for asylum-seekers can often also offer advice on the possibilities of voluntary return. They are often employed by welfare organisations, which take over the care of asylum-seekers and refugees in the governmental initial reception centres and collective housing on the basis of contracts with the authorities responsible. Sometimes counselling on the possibilities of voluntary return is also stipulated by contract (AWO Kreisverband Esslingen 2013). However, the social workers can at least refer people to the counselling centres that can provide the relevant information (Stadt Offen-

29 Languages spoken at the Hamburg Refugee Centre: Arabic, Bosnian, Croatian, Dari, English, Farsi, French, German, Italian, Kurdish-Sorani, Pashtu, Polish, Russian, Serbian, Spanish and Ukrainian.

burg 2015). In Berlin, asylum-seekers receive an “asylum application consultation” from staff at the Reception and Direction Centre at the Federal State Office for Health and Social Affairs (LAGeSo). Here they are informed about the counselling opportunities of the social service working for the LAGeSo and existing return assistance projects (Abgeordnetenhaus Berlin 2013: 2). As part of the “periodical shelter director meetings at the Berlin Accommodation Control Centre (BUL), information is also provided regarding the counselling services offered by the social service” so that the staff of the collective accommodation in Berlin are also informed about the possibilities of return counselling by the social service of the LAGeSo (Abgeordnetenhaus Berlin 2013: 4).

#### *Further actors*

Further directly- or indirectly-integrated governmental actors on the municipal level are staff of the municipalities and cities, who for example forward the contact information of counselling centres or hand out leaflets in their places of employment (inter alia in prisons, municipal libraries, municipal day-care centres or further training facilities), where irregularly-staying persons may be present. If the information material does not reach the irregularly-staying person directly, its content can still reach them via third persons who had access to the information material on site (cf. Table 9).

#### **Non-governmental (selection of examples):**

##### *Non-profit Association for the Support of Asylum-Seekers in Münster (GGUA)*

The GGUA's scope of action regarding return counselling is limited to the city of Münster and to Steinfurt district. If no solution is found for staying in Germany, the project offers counselling and provides support to the persons concerned during their departure. In doing so, the association cooperates with the authorities involved in the return process. GGUA also enables assistance in the country of origin, e.g. through initial financial aid for start-ups or counselling. Children and juveniles receive particular assistance and support (www.ggua.de).

#### *Further non-governmental actors*

Besides the actors mentioned so far, further non-governmental actors are involved in the dissemination of information. The refugee counselling centres deserve particular mention, which primarily offer counselling on residence in Germany – also for irregular migrants – but also provide initial information on questions of return, or can at least refer the persons concerned to return counselling centres (for an overview of refugee counselling centres in Germany see IGFM 2015). In Saxony-Anhalt, basic and further training facilities (e.g. the *Bitterfeld-Wolfen Euro Schools*, the *Naumburg Training Centre of the Internationaler Bund*) as well as non-profit/welfare organisations (*St Johannis GmbH*, *Internationaler Bund – Kinder und Jugendhilfzentrum Harz e. V.*) are responsible for return counselling besides the non-statutory welfare umbrella organisations on the level of districts and cities with district status (Ministerium des Innern Sachsen-Anhalt 2012). Furthermore, on a nationwide level there is a wide array of further non-governmental actors that come into contact with the topic directly or indirectly, such as physicians, legal counselling centres, social workers working with the homeless or in women's shelters (cf. RECEA) or street workers, representatives of religious communities (e.g. the African Christian Council, Armenian churches or migrants') and Diaspora organisations (Hamburg Ghana Union), and the central councils of certain ethnic groups (Central Council of Armenians in Germany), market and shop employees (cf. Chapter 5) with for example ties to specific countries of origin (ethnic economic niches) and trade union counselling centres (cf. Table 9).<sup>30</sup>

<sup>30</sup> The limited consideration of specific local return counselling and reintegration projects allows for the possibility that some locally-adapted communication strategies and campaigns were disregarded. It is conceivable that at municipal level in particular, for example, the local foreigners authority or the local welfare office maintain shorter/alternative communication channels to certain actors such as migrant organisations, parishes, physicians, social workers or assistance initiatives of local collective accommodation, and involve these differently in their provision of information, or these themselves become active in specific ways and establish exchange networks.



Table 9: Other actors disseminating information on (voluntary) return, their role and the rationale for their involvement

Actor	Yes/ No	Role that the actor plays in disseminating information voluntary return	Nature of and rationale for involvement
NGOs / IOs dealing with return counselling and/or implementing AVR schemes	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● See in detail Chapter 4.1.1-4.1.3.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● See in detail Chapter 4.1.1-4.1.3.</li> </ul>
Other NGOs/civil society organisations	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Operate in part as counselling centres in the district (cf. Saxony-Anhalt),</li> <li>● In part, refer to return counselling centres on their websites or in their counselling not originally connected to questions of return when they learn from clients that they intend to return.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Indirectly involved through other matters on account of having contact with persons willing to return or obliged to leave.</li> </ul>
Migrant-led organisations and other migrant-led communities	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Project partners in return projects in some cases, providing own counselling, contact with the country of origin (e. g. Hamburg-Ghana-Bridge),</li> <li>● Receive information material from return projects and return counselling centres to pass on or hand out in their community facilities,</li> <li>● Are invited to attend information events in order to then spread awareness of voluntary return by word of mouth.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Concept of “native counsellor” (IOM 2015c: 21): Diaspora representatives are given an important role in the dissemination of information, as they are expected to relate well to persons willing to return or obliged to leave the country, or have a good understanding of who might be in potential need of assistance.</li> </ul>
Faith-based groups	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Project partners in return projects in some cases, with own counselling, contact to country of origin (e. g. Hamburg-Ghana-Bridge and RECEA).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● cf. discussion on Migrant-led organisation.</li> </ul>
Libraries	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ns</li> </ul>
Social, health and education institutions	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Operate in some cases as counselling centres in the district (cf. Saxony-Anhalt),</li> <li>● Information material on return counselling centres is displayed or handed out for example by social workers in homeless shelters, prisons and women’s shelters, or by street workers and meeting points for irregular migrants (e. g. cafés) (e. g. RECEA),</li> <li>● Point out return counselling centres and reintegration projects which offer open-ended, anonymous counselling on possible return.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Should offer independent and lower-threshold counselling besides the foreigners authorities; especially important for irregular migrants who avoid contact with the authorities,</li> <li>● Receive information material on initial counselling from return projects, since, for example, street workers, homeless shelters, women’s shelters, correctional facilities, etc., come into contact with irregular migrants,</li> <li>● Return addressed in further training courses conducted by actors in social work.</li> </ul>
Case workers	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● cf. discussion on social institutions.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● cf. discussion on social institutions.</li> </ul>
Legal advisors	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Offer counselling to their clients, for example on the measures to be expected in the event of a termination of residence, and refer to counselling centres.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Are mandated to counsel their clients.</li> </ul>
Ombudsman/Citizens’ Office	ns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ns</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● ns</li> </ul>
Trade unions	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● cf. discussion on social facilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● cf. discussion on social facilities.</li> </ul>
Embassies (third countries and EU)	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Issue passports and passport substitutes and initial information on questions pertaining to the country of origin.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Obtaining valid travel documents is mandatory for departure.</li> </ul>
Shopkeepers, Internet café workers, markets	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide display areas for information material from counselling centres,</li> <li>● When sensitised, they can for example refer irregular migrants.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Especially irregular migrants can thus receive initial information,</li> <li>● Initial information provided by shop owners is not binding.</li> </ul>

Sources: Interviews with return counselling centres conducted in the course of this study, further research see entire chapter.

### 4.1.3 Return and reintegration projects

Return and reintegration projects can be distinguished from networking and exchange platforms as well as from the actors involved in counselling. The staff employed in such projects have further-reaching counselling possibilities and assistance options with regard to the mostly specific target group than is the case in general return counselling centres. The staff of return and reintegration projects furthermore perform special information work by compiling and disseminating information material on their projects.

#### International cooperation with German involvement

##### Governmental (selection of examples):

###### *ERIN – European Reintegration Instrument Network*

ERIN is a joint return and reintegration project of seven European partner states (the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Finland, France, the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland and Norway as a non EU country). The network is led by the Netherlands, and offers reintegration assistance for voluntary returnees and persons who have been forcibly returned to their country of origin by way of social and occupational assistance that is provided through contract partners in the respective countries. Reintegration benefits for returnees from Germany are available for Afghanistan, Iran, Nigeria, Pakistan and Somalia (BAMF 2015d). Return counselling centres and foreigners authorities in Germany forward applications for assistance benefits through the ERIN project to the BAMF, which then performs a coordinating function between the applicants and the cooperation partners in the destination countries (BAMF 2015d: 3).

###### *RACOB – Return Assistance in Armenia (2012 to 2014)*

RACOB was a two-year cooperation between the BAMF and the 'French-Armenian Foundation for Development' ('*Fondation Franco-Arménienne pour le Développement*'), whose parent organisation, the 'Armenian Association for Social Support' ('*Association Arménienne d'Aide Sociale*'), is a long-time contracting partner of the 'French Agency in Charge of Migration and Welcoming Foreign People' ('*Office Français de*

*l'Immigration et de l'Intégration*'). This was a model project intended to intensify Franco-German cooperation in voluntary return and test the use of the already established reintegration infrastructure of an EU Member State (in this case France) in a destination country (Armenia) by a third EU Member State (Germany). Its goal was to assist Armenians willing to return through an integration service in the destination country in their endeavours to return and become reintegrated permanently. To this end, individual reintegration support and counselling were offered, e.g. general social counselling in the shape of assistance with administrative issues, finding a job and housing, medical care, school and kindergarten registration, professional skill-building measures as well as support with start-ups through the development of a business plan, financial support for purchases, providing necessary training, etc. (BAMF/OFIG 2013). For the dissemination of information and the initial contact, information was made available through a website and contact points in Germany, France and Armenia, as were leaflets and posters. However, despite intense public relations efforts, the staff revealed that demand in Germany was rather low for the entire run of the project. It became clear that the official channels of information (Internet, project leaflets, etc.) may be less significant than publicity by word of mouth. Procedures and best practices of the project received final discussion and comparison in the course of a workshop.

Similar structures can be found in *TIA – Targeted Initiative for Armenia* (BAMF 2015g), *SIREADA* (IOM, no date), *TIGEO – Targeted Initiative Georgia* (Baraulina/Kreienbrink 2013: 258) and *ReintegrAction* (until 2013, IOM 2013b), albeit these represent cooperations between different countries with different target groups and destination countries. These initiatives also have their own websites and publish their own assessment studies, interim reports and project reports (e.g. *SIREADA* and *ReintegrAction*).

##### Non-governmental (selection of examples)

###### *RECEA (Reintegration Center Armenia)*

RECEA is a transnational reintegration project, led in Germany by Bremerhaven Heimatgarten

AWO in cooperation with the EU Member States Poland and Bulgaria. The target group consists of Armenians living in one of the three countries, with or without a residence permit, who would like to return voluntarily. The project aims to facilitate returnees' 'reintegration phase' through an 'integration centre' in Yerevan which offers on-site assistance in terms of individual (welfare) counselling, language courses, psychological care, initial financial aid, seed-funding, etc. With regard to the dissemination of information, work in the project is proactive, as the 2014 RECEA Assessment Report explains: "To increase the state of knowledge of all interested parties about the challenges and opportunities of re-emigration, the project also includes a broad base of public relations activities, including ongoing reports, newsletters, articles in traditional media as well as an ongoing online presence consisting of a website, a blog and Facebook" (Pohlmann/Häuser 2014: 5). Information material was furthermore distributed in "penal facilities, women's shelters, intercultural meeting places and offices for intercultural relations [...] to be able to reach the target group in these facilities, and also to inform these facilities about the project's network" (ibid.: 14). This project emerged from return assistance projects in the 1990s, when hundreds of thousands of civil war refugees fled to Germany from the Balkan States, some of whom returned to their countries of origin after the civil war (via assisted voluntary return projects) ([www.awo-bremerhaven.de](http://www.awo-bremerhaven.de)).

## Nationwide return and reintegration projects

### Governmental (selection of examples):

#### URA 2

This return project in Kosovo, which was launched in 2009 and is coordinated by the BAMF, offers voluntary returnees as well as forcibly returned persons individual counselling prior to their return, and especially assistance services thereafter. To this end, the Federal Government and the Federal States Baden-Württemberg, Lower Saxony, North Rhine-Westphalia, Saxony, Saxony-Anhalt and Thuringia agreed on a cooperation project and opened a

return centre in Pristina.<sup>31</sup> All returnees who have been staying in Germany for at least six months are eligible for social counselling there, while returnees from the participating Federal States furthermore receive immediate aid in obtaining accommodation, furniture, the necessary medical care and reintegration benefits in the shape of professional training and employment promotion measures or also start-up training. School pupils are eligible to receive a basic materials kit for school and can attend special language courses. The project staff furthermore cooperate with the 'Office for Integration' set up by the Kosovo Government at Pristina Airport, which offers reintegration services to returnees who left Kosovo before 29 July 2010. Project and contact information is available on a sub-domain of the BAMF website, but also on several websites of the participating Federal States' Ministries. Among other things, these websites offer project leaflets in Albanian, German, English and Serbian for download – including a leaflet aimed explicitly at migrants with children (BAMF 2015e).

### *Programme 'Migration for Development' – component 'Returning Experts'*

The Centre for International Migration and Development (CIM)<sup>32</sup> was commissioned by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) to support returning experts to contribute to the development of their country of origins by knowledge spillovers: More than 10,000 migrants returned as part of the project to their respective country of origins starting an employment with particular relevance to the development of the country, since 2004. Assistance is offered to legally staying "foreign professionals who want to use the skills and experience that they have acquired through their studies, training or an occupation in Germany to help develop their home country" (CIM 2014).

31 Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania also participated in URA 2 up until the end of 2014.

32 CIM is a working party of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the *Zentrale Auslands- und Fachvermittlung* jobs abroad department of the Federal Employment Agency.

Universities and their counselling centres for international students are also actively involved in the dissemination of information. Among other things, an audio slideshow about a returned skilled professional from Morocco is offered on the website ([www.cimonline.de](http://www.cimonline.de)) in order to publicise the programme. Due to its very specific target group, the programme is of secondary importance to the irregularly-staying third-country nationals on which this study focuses.

#### **Governmental and non-governmental (selection of examples)**

##### *REAG/GARP – Reintegration and Emigration Programmes for Asylum-Seekers in Germany/ Government Assisted Repatriation Programmes*

While REAG provides transport costs and lump-sum financial travel benefits, GARP offers initial aid for reintegration. Furthermore, REAG/GARP also support departures operationally through IOM Germany (on the target group and the number of departures, see Chapter 2.3.1). The IOM Germany website ([www.germany.iom.int/de/reaggarp](http://www.germany.iom.int/de/reaggarp)) and the websites of the Federal Ministry of the Interior, the BAMF and various Federal States' Ministries offer downloads of a great deal of information on REAG/GARP in several languages (application forms, studies, annual reports, brochures, fact sheets, leaflets, statistics reports, country reports, etc.). The IOM furthermore provides information proactively by sending out for instance multi-language leaflets and brochures of their projects to counselling centres and authorities and by participating in training events for counsellors (IOM 2015a). Only limited direct counselling for persons willing or obliged to return takes place in this context. The staff primarily support the authorities which forward applications, especially authorities and non-governmental return counselling centres, when applying for funds.

##### *IOM – Reintegration for Returnees in Northern Iraq*

This return and reintegration project is run by the IOM with the support of the BAMF and the RF. The target group consists of Iraqi nationals who wish to return to Iraqi Kurdistan voluntarily, and who still maintain close family ties in the

region. A reintegration plan is drafted beforehand and a reintegration contract agreed on in a personal counselling session. Support is offered within Iraqi Kurdistan with regard to travelling on to the place of origin or destination, starting up or developing micro businesses, finding employment, vocational training and, if necessary, with emergency shelters, education, child-care, proper medical care and psychological care. The dissemination of information in this project is conducted in a similar manner as within REAG/GARP. Information can be retrieved via the Federal Ministry of the Interior, the BAMF and the IOM Germany websites, the latter also offering it in English. Condensed information is also provided in a leaflet that is available in German, Arabic, English and Kurdish (IOM, no date).

#### **Non-governmental (selection of examples):**

##### *Solwodi – Solidarity with Women in Distress*

Solwodi is a return and reintegration project with nationwide reach for the professional and social reintegration of women migrants from developing countries and Central and Eastern European States who find themselves in distress or who have experienced violence (especially victims of human trafficking and forced prostitution). The project is aimed explicitly at irregularly-staying women migrants, and is furthermore the only return project supported by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development which explicitly also includes third-country nationals who are obliged to leave the country (Deutscher Bundestag 2014a: 5). Solwodi actively promotes its counselling services – directly and indirectly also for voluntary return, since return counselling is just one area among many of fields in which this NGO works. The staff take part in nationwide conferences (e.g. the German Bishops' Conference), but also attend local city fairs and political rallies, at which they operate stands and information material in many languages. Apart from a website with large amounts of target group-specific information, the project also maintains a Facebook profile ([www.solwodi.de](http://www.solwodi.de)).

## Federal State-wide return and reintegration projects (also more than one Federal State)

### Governmental (selection of examples):

#### *Rhineland-Palatinate state return initiative*

The Ministry of Integration, Family, Children, Youth and Women funds a return assistance programme limited to Rhineland-Palatinate that goes beyond the assisted return projects (e.g. REAG/GARP) that are accessible nationwide (2014 with roughly 1.36 Million €). The funds are primarily available to the districts and cities with district status that use them to plan and implement their own return projects, assign return projects and measures, for example to welfare organisations, and develop individual solutions and provide support for the return of those affected, including financial assistance (MIFKJF 2014: 1). Furthermore, the counselling office of the Diakonie Trier und Simmern-Trarbach receives funding from the project that is earmarked exclusively for the counselling activities and the dissemination of information by the municipal counselling centres (cf. above for details).

Similar state assistance programmes as the one in Rhineland-Palatinate can also be found, inter alia, in Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria and North Rhine-Westphalia.

### Governmental and non-governmental (selection of examples)

#### *IOM – Berlin Information and Return Counselling Centre – Reintegration Assistance for Returnees to Vietnam and Kenya*

The Return Counselling Centre was established in 2006 and was originally managed in cooperation with the Berlin Senate Administration of the Interior and Sport. The Reintegration Assistance for Returnees to Vietnam was created in 2012. It is directed by the IOM and was funded until 2014 by the RF and the Berlin Senate Administration of the Interior and Sport. The Brandenburg Ministry of the Interior and Municipal Affairs has also been involved since 2015, and the project receives funding from the AMIF and the participating Federal States. The reintegration project offers Vietnamese nation-

als in Berlin return planning, aid and assistance regardless of their residence status. The counselling centre first of all develops individual return concepts with the persons concerned and enables, in particular, start-ups in close coordination and cooperation with the families and other actors in Vietnam (IOM 2013a). Since 2015, reintegration assistance has been possible for Kenya as well as for Vietnam. See the case study in Chapter 5 for details of the project's information strategies.

### Non-governmental (selection of examples):

#### *Hamburg-Ghana-Bridge*

This return project offers return counselling and planning, information on prospects and the situation in Ghana, support in applying for return assistance, referrals to aid organisations in Ghana and start-up assistance (including small financial subsidies) to Ghanaians living in Hamburg (refugees and irregular migrants). Hamburg-Ghana-Bridge is located at the Hamburg Refugee Centre (cf. above), and receives funding from the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg Authority for Employment, Social Affairs, Family and Integration and, for the time being, from the RF. It is supported by a cooperative association made up of Hamburg institutions and organisations from Ghana. The latter include: the African Christian Council (ACCH), the Hamburg-Ghana Union, the Diakonie, the Eine-Welt-Netzwerk, the Evangelical-Lutheran Church and Church district, the Refugee Centre, the Intercultural Migrant Integration Centre (IMIC) and the Mission Academy (Hamburg-Ghana-Bridge, no date).

#### *AWO Nuremberg – Kosovo Project*

Counselling centres are located in Nuremberg as well as in Pristina (Kosovo). The counselling centre in Nuremberg has a primarily mediating function with regard to reintegration counselling in Pristina. Meanwhile, the office there offers post-return personal counselling, assistance in administrative issues and help with finding a job, as well as developing specific reintegration measures. Furthermore, it provides group offers for mothers, language courses (especially for children), special assistance services for old and sick returnees and localised counselling

throughout Kosovo in the shape of mobile counselling and home visits. The project emerged indirectly from the URA 1 governmental project (cf. URA 2 above), in which the AWO had participated. The experiences and contacts from the project were afterwards used to create a separate reintegration project. It is funded by the Free State of Bavaria and the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe ([www.awo-nuernberg.de](http://www.awo-nuernberg.de)).

## Municipal return and reintegration projects

### Governmental (selection of examples):

*QUARK - Skill-building, Assistance, Job Perspectives, Reintegration (Schwäbisch Gmünd)*

This return and reintegration project has been run since 2005 as a cooperation between the Ostalbkreis Administrative District Office (Landratsamt Ostalbkreis) and the city of Schwäbisch Gmünd, and receives funding from the RF, the BAMF and the Federal State Baden-Württemberg. The target groups are refugees, asylum-seekers and other migrants who wish to leave voluntarily. „The aim is to promote the voluntary return of refugees through information, the alleviation of fears, the joint development of individual perspectives for the future and the development of services for the fulfilment of personal plans for the future” (Ostalbkreis 2009: 2). The project offers personal counselling, return planning and benefits that go beyond REAG/GARP. A website offers essential information in German. The project furthermore offers referrals to other counselling centres and internships already while in Germany ([www.schwaebisch-gmuend.de/5501-neu.html](http://www.schwaebisch-gmuend.de/5501-neu.html)).

### *Coming Home (Greater Munich)*

A reintegration and return counselling project of the Munich Office for Return Assistance, which is funded by the RF and the Bavarian State Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs, Family and Integration. The target groups are recognised refugees, asylum-seekers and third-country nationals living in the greater Munich area who are obliged to leave, albeit the support particularly focuses on the most vulnerable. The extended financial commitment to return assistance is also justified here by forecast

savings in the government budget: “Besides the humanitarian goals, financial aspects also play a role. By assisting permanent reintegration in the country of origin, around 400,000 € in welfare benefits are saved every year” (Landeshauptstadt München 2015: 4). Project reports are published annually, and up to four information letters are drafted and sent out. These report on counselling activities, but also on specialist conferences that have been held, new leaflets and skill-building opportunities for potential returnees (e.g. IT courses) (Landeshauptstadt München 2014).

### 4.1.4 Funding of return counselling and reintegration projects

Most of the governmental and intergovernmental counselling centres and return projects considered in this study received funding from a mix of sources. The most important sources of funding are distributed among the EU<sup>33</sup>, federal<sup>34</sup> and Federal State<sup>35</sup> levels. REAG/GARP, for example, was hitherto funded by the European Return Fund, and in future will receive funding from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Federal Ministry of the Interior and the ministries of the Federal States. If a return and reinte-

33 The following actors are among those who have received and continue to receive co-funding from the European Return Fund: *BeNIP*, *Coming Home*, *IntegPlan*, *IOM Reintegration for Returnees in Northern Iraq*, *IOM ReintegrAction*, *QUARK*, *RACOB*, *SIREADA*, the *Central Return Counselling Offices for Refugees* in Bavaria and the European joint project *ERIN*. Targeted Initiative Georgia and TIA were funded by the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) until 2014, the funding instrument of the European Neighbourhood Policy which was replaced by the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI).

34 Projects co-funded with federal funds include: *CSI*, *ERIN*, *IOM-ReintegrAction*, *RACOB*, *URA 2* and *ZIRF*.

35 The *Counselling Office of the Diakonie Trier and Simmern-Trarbach*, for example, receives funding from the Rhineland-Palatinate Ministry for Integration, Family, Children, Youth and Women; *IntegPlan* receives funding from the RF and several Länder Ministries (Bavarian Ministry for Labour and Social Affairs, Family and Integration, the Baden-Württemberg Ministry of the Interior, the Bremen Senator for Social Affairs, Children, Youth and Women, the Hesse Ministry for Social Affairs and Integration, the Lower Saxony Ministry of the Interior and Sport, the North Rhine-Westphalia Ministry of the Interior and Municipalities and the Saxony-Anhalt Ministry of the Interior and Sport).



gration project is based on cooperation with other EU Member States, it is typically funded by the participating States and the EU (hitherto especially the RF, in the future AMIF).

While the majority of counselling centres and return projects are funded by the RF as well as the Federal Government and the Federal States, the responsibility for setting up and managing the counselling centres and projects is given to various actors – especially non-statutory welfare organisations. The Central Return Counselling Centres in Bavaria, for example, receive most of their funding from the RF and the Free State of Bavaria. They are however managed by the AWO, DRK, Caritas and the Central Franconian Government. That said, there are also projects that are both funded and managed by the Government, such as the URA 2 return and reintegration project, for which the BAMF is responsible.

The majority of the non-governmental actors considered likewise receive mixed funding, albeit the RF represents the most important European source of funding for the ongoing projects (in the future AMIF), although some actors also receive funds from the European Refugee Fund.<sup>36</sup> ERSO West receives 80 percent of its funding from the European Directorate General for International Cooperation and Development (EuropeAid). Then again, AWO Nuremberg's Kosovo Project is funded through the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe. Besides the EU funds, which must always receive co-funding up to a certain percentage in order to be granted, there are counselling centres and return projects which also receive funding from the Federal States and municipalities. In addition to EU, Federal Government, Federal State and municipal funds, some non-governmental actors also provide funds of their own for return counselling, for example through donations, membership fees, investment management or church taxes (see Chapter 6.4 on the challenges of mixed funding and project work).

## 4.2 Tools used to disseminate information on voluntary return

Among the diverse range of actors which are active in return counselling and the dissemination of information, one can roughly distinguish between two ways in which information is disseminated: On the one hand, there are those actors who draft information material on voluntary return in general for their counselling (for the counsellors) or for a specific counselling service, and then distribute it, whilst on the other hand there are those actors who do not prepare information themselves, but draw on existing information material or receive it from others to then pass it on to prospective returnees or persons who are obliged to leave the country.

In all, data from 50 governmental, partly governmental and non-governmental return counselling centres and projects involved in voluntary return received consideration in the analysis of the channels and media of information provided. It was not possible to make actor-specific differences clear in the condensed, tabular presentation of the results in most cases (cf. Table 10). A channel of communication is also listed if only one actor uses it. In some cases, actors are mentioned representing positive examples of disseminating information via the respective channel. This does not however mean that they are necessarily the only actors using the respective medium in a particularly illustrative way. Network and exchange platforms will furthermore only receive limited consideration in the following two chapters because they play a special role within the dissemination of information, which only indirectly affects prospective returnees.

<sup>36</sup> For example, Caritas Neckar-Odenwald, since the return counselling is affiliated with Caritas' general migration service. JADWIGA and SOLWODI also receive funding from the EFF besides the Federal State – in the case of SOLWODI also from the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.



Table 10: Tools used for disseminating information on voluntary return by governmental and non-governmental actors (part 1)

	Concise description of the information provided (focus points)	Concept, funding, implementation
<b>Leaflets, brochures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Contact details and times when reachable (in person, by telephone, by e-mail, on website),</li> <li>● Brief profile of the organisation, address &amp; opening times, guarantee of anonymity, opportunities to donate,</li> <li>● Admission criteria/target groups, e.g. by countries of origin, vulnerability, e.g. women from developing countries and/or women affected by violence (Solwodi, JADWIGA, 'EVA' Caritas Wuppertal/Solingen),</li> <li>● Information on range of services, range of languages spoken at the return assistance facilities, medical issues,</li> <li>● Preparations before the return, depending on target group, e.g. qualified or irregular migrants,</li> <li>● Return with children, their rights, preparation and formalities (e.g. Diakonie Cologne, Central Return Counselling Offices for Refugees/AWO Bavaria, URA 2),</li> <li>● Special return projects, e.g. RECEA (AWO Bremerhaven) or Hamburg-Ghana-Bridge (Hamburg Refugee Centre),</li> <li>● Positioning of the organisation with regard to involvement in voluntary return,</li> <li>● Participating actors, cooperation partners and sources of funding (e.g. EU funds),</li> <li>● Portfolio/references: return and reintegration projects that have already been conducted (e.g. Solwodi fact sheet),</li> <li>● Illustration of positive return biographies, mostly with photo (e.g. Coming Home, QUARK, Reintegration Northern Iraq),</li> <li>● Dates for supervision, events, conferences, study trips (especially through networking actors such as IntegPlan).</li> </ul>	see Chapter 4.1 and Appendix 4
<b>Billboards, posters</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Contact details (see above), counselling centre address &amp; opening hours, guarantee of anonymity, opportunities to donate,</li> <li>● Admission criteria/target groups, e.g. by countries of origin, vulnerability,</li> <li>● Languages spoken by counsellors, participating actors, cooperation partners and sources of funding (e.g. EU funds).</li> </ul>	see Chapter 4.1
<b>Media campaigns (in German, but also in other languages)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Project contents, admission criteria/target groups, e.g. by countries of origin, vulnerability, range of services (cf. also RECEA, IOM Reintegration Assistance for Returnees to Vietnam),</li> <li>● Press releases e.g. with reference to the annual report, mentioning the number of persons who left the country, destination countries, portrayal of positive return biographies, often with photo of the returnees in the destination country; report on a 'typical' counselling situation and the return process,</li> <li>● Mention of languages spoken by the counsellors and contact information.</li> </ul>	see Chapter 4.1
<b>Websites</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Contact details (in person, by telephone, e-mail, on a website), address information (directions, online map service with route calculating function, map of Germany with counselling centres of the organisation marked), opening times,</li> <li>● Range of languages (website allows changing of language),</li> <li>● Guarantee of anonymity in counselling,</li> <li>● Admission criteria/target groups, e.g. by status groups or countries of origin (see above),</li> <li>● In some cases detailed list of the range of return assistance in Germany,</li> <li>● In some cases information on entry requirements, labour market, security situation and reintegration in certain countries of origin (e.g. Diakonie Cologne, especially with country fact sheets) or reference to ZIRF (see above), organisational issues before departure,</li> <li>● Application forms for certain return and reintegration projects (e.g. REAG/GARP, Reintegration Northern Iraq),</li> <li>● Links to other return projects (especially Cologne Return Project, IOM and ZIRF), partner organisations,</li> <li>● Services in the destination country/post-return support in reintegration projects (e.g. Kosovo/AWO Nuremberg, ERIN, RACOB),</li> <li>● Medical issues (see above), preparations for return depending on target group (see above),</li> <li>● Parents returning with children &amp; their rights, necessary preparations and formalities, special return projects (see above),</li> <li>● Positioning of the organisation with regard to involvement in voluntary return,</li> <li>● Participating actors, cooperation partners and sources of funding (e.g. EU funds),</li> <li>● Portfolio/references: return and reintegration projects already conducted (e.g. Solwodi fact sheet),</li> <li>● Illustration of positive return biographies (e.g. IOM Reintegration Assistance for Returnees to Vietnam, Berlin),</li> <li>● Glossary on migration/flight/return (e.g. Raphaelswerk, Caritas Münster),</li> <li>● Links to statements of accounts, assessment reports, studies, specialist papers,</li> <li>● Direct donations can also be made online.</li> </ul>	see Chapter 4.1 and Appendix 4

Table 10: Tools used for disseminating information on voluntary return by governmental and non-governmental actors (part 2)

	Concise description of the information provided (focus points)	Concept, funding, implementation
<b>Social media (e.g. Facebook)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Project outline/range of services (e.g. RECEA – Reintegration Center Armenia, TIA), opportunities to donate (bank details),</li> <li>● Contacts and address details (with a map in some cases), opening times of the counselling centres, guarantee of anonymity,</li> <li>● Participating actors, cooperation partners and sources of funding (e.g. EU funds).</li> </ul>	see Chapter 4.1
<b>Online discussion forums/blogs</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Current programme events and information (e.g. 'RECEA' project).</li> </ul>	see Chapter 4.1
<b>Personal counselling and information centres (drop-in clinics)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Individual return and/or reintegration plan (information on country of origin/enables contact with ZIRF),</li> <li>● Admission criteria/target groups, e.g. by countries of origin, vulnerability, e.g. women from developing countries and/or women affected by violence (Solwodi, JADWIGA, 'EVA' Caritas Wuppertal/Solingen),</li> <li>● Preparations for return (e.g. IOM application, exit documents, bookings),</li> <li>● Rights and obligations of returnees – also with regard to a non-return and options on the regularisation of residence,</li> <li>● Psychological and pastoral care in some cases,</li> <li>● Establishing contact with other counselling centres and return projects (in Germany as well as in the destination country),</li> <li>● Assistance in applying for benefits from REAG/GARP and other return projects,</li> <li>● In the event of illness or pregnancy, establishing contact with physicians and midwives (inter alia Bremen Refugee Initiative in Germany, AWO Hildesheim in the destination country),</li> <li>● Providing information on potential entitlements to social security benefits, pensions benefits.</li> </ul>	see Chapter 4.1
<b>Refuges, homeless shelters, women's shelters, cafés for irregular migrants</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Distribution of information material (e.g. leaflets) from return counselling centres and projects (e.g. RECEA),</li> <li>● Oral indication of contact details, address information and opening times of return counselling centres (cf. RECEA),</li> <li>● Directions to counselling centres and initial indications of the possible content of counselling.</li> </ul>	see Chapter 4.1
<b>Visit of Diaspora and/or faith based groups</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Cf. refuges/homeless shelters, etc. (inter alia RECEA, IOM Reintegration Assistance for Returnees to Vietnam).</li> </ul>	see Chapter 4.1
<b>Conferences, trade fairs, training courses</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Information stands, specialist presentations, training on projects and employment (e.g. Solwodi, JADWIGA and IntegPlan), exchange with other actors (e.g. migration and refugee counselling), distribution of information material to multipliers – also from other fields who however are in contact with the target groups (e.g. 'EVA' of Caritas Wuppertal/Solingen).</li> </ul>	see Chapter 4.1
<b>Annual and conference reports, position papers, circulars</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Presentation of development of counselling work or of the project progress (annual statistics on counselling, departures, the demographics of returnees with regard to socio-economic aspects &amp; legal residence status, funding, country information),</li> <li>● Information for the professional public and press which may take this as a reason to report,</li> <li>● Illustration of positive return biographies (e.g. Vietnam Reintegration Assistance for Returnees to Vietnam, JADWIGA),</li> <li>● Legal circumstances of the measures,</li> <li>● History of the organisation, documentation of events hosted and participated in, conferences, study trips (e.g. JADWIGA, Central Return Counselling Offices for Refugees, especially networking actors such as IntegPlan).</li> </ul>	see Chapter 4.1, Appendix 4 and Bibliography

Sources: See list of non-governmental actors surveyed, including links, in Appendix 4.

### 4.3 Accessibility and visual presentation of information

The range of nationwide channels of information described in the chapter above and the information material, along with the information contained therein, will now be examined in a further step with regard to their accessibility for (irregularly-staying) prospective returnees and persons obliged to return. Those actors and platforms which primarily offer consulting to counselling centres and/or serve as networking platforms were excluded from the examination as they only exert an indirect influence on the dissemination of information for irregular migrants. Six criteria were considered: range of languages spoken, visual presentation, placement, the accessibility of online services, the accessibility of the counselling centres and hotlines and the guarantee of anonymity. In order to avoid redundancy with the actor profiles in Chapter 4.1 and to maintain clarity, this chapter will mostly go without citing specific sources, and only a selection of actors will receive mention. The sources on the individual actors' leaflets, websites and studies have been arranged in Appendix 4.

#### 4.3.1 Range of languages

There are distinct differences between the various channels of information regarding the range of languages, so that these channels also require individual discussion in the following.

##### Leaflets

In theory, leaflets with information on the opportunities for voluntary return are available to (irregularly-staying) third-country nationals in a wide range of languages. The only condition is that one of the actors listed above has displayed the leaflets in the respective language at their offices or that a counsellor downloads them from an appropriate website and passes these on during a counselling session.

Among the governmental and inter-governmental actors, Coming Home, LAB NI and IOM (REAG/GARP) deserve particularly positive mention: 'Coming Home' leaflets are available in twelve languages<sup>37</sup>. LAB NI also

publishes their leaflets with initial information on the opportunities of voluntary return in twelve languages<sup>38</sup>. REAG/GARP offers fact sheets in 13 languages<sup>39</sup> for download. Furthermore, all of the country-specific projects offer information material in the languages of the respective destination countries (cf. for example IOM Reintegration Assistance for Returnees to Vietnam and Kenya, IOM Reintegration Northern Iraq, RACOB, SIREADA, TIA and URA 2). Among the non-governmental actors, emphasis goes to the Foreigners and Refugee Office of Gelsenkirchen and Wattenscheid Evangelical Church district, who offer their leaflets in six further languages besides German (Albanian, Arabic, Bosnian, English, French, Turkish). Solwodi offers its leaflets for women in particular need of protection in four languages (German, English, French and Spanish), and the DRK Hamm in three further languages (Arabic, English and French). As with governmental actors, non-governmental actors too translate their information material into at least one further language of the destination country, where the project in question is country specific (cf. Hamburg-Ghana-Bridge).

##### Websites

The majority of the websites of governmental, inter-governmental as well as non-governmental actors considered in this study are maintained in German. The Internet presence of REAG/GARP, ERIN, URA 2 and IOM Reintegration Northern Iraq are furthermore available in English. However, none of the websites of other governmental projects or counselling centres is available in any further languages. A few selected non-governmental actors offer multi-language websites – or parts of their Internet services in at least one further language. Solwodi, the Diakonie Cologne, AWO Kosovo Project Nuremberg and AWO Heimatgarten offer an English-language version of their Internet presence. The website contents of the Bremen Refugee Initiative are furthermore available in French and Spanish, and the Hamburg Refugee Centre offers at least concise information in Arabic, English, French, Farsi and Russian.

<sup>37</sup> Albanian, Arabic, Bosnian, Chinese, Dari, English, French, German, Kurdish-Sorani, Pashtu, Russian and Vietnamese.

<sup>38</sup> Albanian, Arabic, Armenian, Chinese, English, Farsi, French, German, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Turkish and Vietnamese.

<sup>39</sup> Albanian, Bengali, Bosnian, Croatian, English, French, German, Macedonian, Montenegrin, Russian, Serbian (Cyrillic), Serbian (Latin), Spanish and Turkish.

### Personal counselling in the return counselling centres

Information is scant regarding the languages in which governmental return counselling centres are able to offer counselling. It is however unlikely that counselling is offered across the board in other languages than German, especially if the counselling activities of the foreigners authorities, social welfare offices and social services in collective accommodation for asylum-seekers are considered as well. Although a further language besides German is spoken by some members of the staff in many foreigners authorities and social welfare offices, this is not a prerequisite for recruitment. International cooperation projects usually offer information in the local languages through telephone counselling provided by the cooperation organisations and authorities in the destination countries. This is the case, for example, with the Targeted Initiative Georgia project, whose leaflets already refer to the counselling centre in Georgia. Counselling through the IOM projects is available in English as well as other languages besides German (e.g. for Northern Iraq also in French and via the staff in the Region of Iraqi Kurdistan in Kurdish languages and Arabic). The Berlin IOM information and return counselling centre employs a Vietnamese speaker in the 'Reintegration Assistance for Returnees to Vietnam' project (cf. Chapter 5). Furthermore, some of the Central Return Counselling Centres for refugees in Northern, Western, Eastern and Southern Bavaria offer counselling in Russian besides German and English.

Although staff of the inter-governmental REAG/GARP return assistance project primarily offer consulting in German to applicant authorities and non-governmental return counselling centres in applying for return assistance for persons who are willing or obliged to return, personal return counselling is offered in a total of 17 further languages<sup>40</sup>.

40 Bengali, Bosnian, Croatian, English, French, Hindi, Macedonian, Mongolian, Montenegrin, Portuguese, Punjabi, Romanian, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, Turkish and Urdu.

Among the non-governmental actors, three personal counselling projects deserve emphasis with regard to the range of languages offered: Hamburg Refugee Centre, where counselling is available in 16 languages<sup>41</sup>; Diakonie Cologne, which offers eleven languages<sup>42</sup>; and Bremen Refugee Initiative, which manages to offer counselling in as many as seven languages<sup>43</sup>. Caritas Hildesheim offers counselling sessions in Kurdish and Turkish; Caritas Neckar-Odenwald in Serbian and Croatian and AWO Heimatgarten offers English in several of its counselling centres. It is likely that many further counselling centres offer counselling in other languages besides German.

### Social media

Only few governmental and non-governmental actors maintain their own social media profiles. Among the governmental actors, the TIA project maintains a Facebook presence that provides information on current affairs and events in Armenian and English besides German. Among the non-governmental actors, the vast majority of NGOs do not have a social media presence regarding their return counselling services. Exceptions include the Facebook presence of GGUA e.V. in Münster, where information on the association can be found in English and French.

#### 4.3.2 Visual presentation

A systematic, qualified analysis of the visual presentation of the media used by governmental and non-governmental actors to provide information was not possible within the scope of this study. There were neither studies nor assessments to build on which had examined the presentation of the websites and the information material with regard to its visual imagery, intelligibility, target group orientation or user friendliness.

41 Range of languages offered by Hamburg Refugee Centre: Arabic, Bosnian, Croatian, Dari, English, Farsi, French, German, Italian, Kurdish-Sorani, Pashtu, Polish, Russian, Serbian, Spanish, Ukrainian.

42 Range of languages offered by *Diakonie Köln*: Arabic, English, French, German, Kikuyu, Kisuaeli, Kurdish, Polish, Russian, Spanish and Turkish.

43 Range of languages offered by Bremen Refugee Initiative: Arabic, English, French, German, Greek, Spanish and Turkish.

#### 4.3.3 Placement of information material

No general statements regarding the placement of leaflets and brochures can be made for Germany or for the vast number of actors. It is however likely that in those regions where (several) governmental, inter-governmental and non-governmental actors offer return counselling, some information material (e.g. leaflets) has a broader range of distribution and can be found in various venues – also outside the counselling centres. The availability of counselling centres and opportunities for the staff to visit in person is likely to increase the local willingness of further actors to distribute information material in their shops, associations, social facilities, trade union headquarters, etc., or to explicitly ask the counselling centres for information material. Furthermore, the commitment and funding of the counselling centres are the decisive factors regarding the creation and active distribution of information material.

#### 4.3.4 Accessibility of online services

In an online query on the most commonly used search engines for the German terms “*Rückkehrberatung*”, “*freiwillige Rückkehr*”, “*Beratung freiwillige Rückkehr*”, “*Rückkehr Herkunftsland/Heimatland*” (“return counselling”, “voluntary return”, “counselling voluntary return”, “return country of origin/home”) (date: 28 May 2015), links to governmental and non-governmental organisations were among the first 20 hits. These included both actors aiming to provide information on a nationwide level, as well as many others that focus on specific regions. The information sites of the BAMF/ZIRF, IOM-REAG/GARP and the Central Return Counselling Centres in Bavaria ranked particularly highly among the governmental and inter-governmental actors. The Diakonie Cologne occupies a special position besides some nationwide and regionally-orientated counselling centres among the non-governmental actors’ sites. The ‘Exits’ project of the Diakonie Cologne and its website ([www.projekt-auswege.kirche-koeln.de](http://www.projekt-auswege.kirche-koeln.de)) deserve particular mention. Although the project ended in 2012, the website continues to offer a wide range of answers to central questions associated with the topic of (voluntary) return. The website is prominently placed a number of times in all combinations of the terms queried. The high ranking in the

key query terms can likely also be explained by the fact that a number of further governmental, inter-governmental and non-governmental actors link to the Diakonie Cologne on their websites (“backlinks”). The website of the Diakonie Cologne in turn links to a large number of other counselling centre and return project websites (“outbound links”), which from the point of view of search engine optimisation (SEO) represents an important positive factor and helps ensure the prominent placement of the website in the search engines.

In an unfiltered query for English terms such as “voluntary return (Germany)”, “assisted voluntary return (Germany)”, “return home country”, “return counselling” or “voluntary return advice”, the English-language sites from neighbouring European countries dominated the results. In a filtered search for sites registered in Germany, the search engines brought up first and foremost governmental, international and inter-governmental actors and projects (BAMF/ZIRF, IOM, ZAV and Central Return Counselling Offices for Refugees). On sites of the non-governmental actors and return counselling centres, only the Hamburg Refugee Centre can be found besides the return counselling of the Diakonie Cologne and the Central Return Counselling Offices for Refugees in Bavaria. Adding city names to the different search terms, however, makes a difference. In that case, further counselling centres – especially those of some non-governmental organisations – can also be found.

All in all, a German-language query on the Internet showed that counselling centres could be found – as long as there were counselling centres in the catchment area of the person conducting the query. The mutual linking among the actors is likely to help ensure this. A different situation presents itself in an English-language query, which gave sub-optimal results, especially among the non-governmental actors, which were hard to find using English search terms. Non-German-speaking prospective counselling clients who conduct an Internet query are practically only referred to governmental counselling and information services or, with regard to non-governmental actors, to the site of the Diakonie Cologne, where they however find a great deal of information and links to counselling centres nationwide.

### 4.3.5 Accessibility of counselling centres and hotlines as well as the costs involved

Return counselling centres publish their addresses, contact data and opening times on their websites, leaflets and posters. For better orientation, numerous websites and leaflets furthermore offer route descriptions and maps showing the counselling centres. To this end, popular web mapping services (especially Google Maps) are also embedded. They offer a flexible selection regarding the map presentation and route calculations (cf. inter alia Hamburg Refugee Centre<sup>44</sup>).

The opening times of the counselling centres differ from organisation to organisation. Typically, they are open for a few hours on several weekdays. Personal counselling is not possible on weekends as a rule. Some do not provide a drop-in service for personal counselling, and an appointment must be made by e-mail or telephone.

If no personal counselling is offered, e-mail and telephone contact details are published through the channels of information. Return counselling centre telephone hotlines are typically local landline numbers that are only billed at local rates. There are usually no fees for the personal return counselling of prospective returnees and persons obliged to return; it is financed externally by the funding for counselling centres and return projects (Raphaelswerk 2015: 8; IOM Informations- und Rückkehrberatungsstelle 2015: 2).

### 4.3.6 Confidentiality considerations

Numerous leaflets, posters and websites of governmental and non-governmental actors guarantee discretion and anonymity on first contact and in counselling (cf. for example Caritas, Coming Home, IOM Information and Return Counselling Centre in Berlin, QUARK, Solwodi). It is however likely that those actors who do not refer to this through their channels of communication also generally guarantee anonymity, especially when it comes to irregularly-staying third-country nationals. Official authorities

are an exception to this rule. They are obliged to report irregular migrants as a matter of principle. Yet, among non-governmental actors, the guarantee of anonymity applies exclusively to return counselling. If irregularly-staying third-country nationals decide to return or depart to a country outside the Schengen area via AVR(R) packages, contact with the authorities is strictly mandatory, as respective travel documents need to be presented at the border crossing at the airport or the outer borders of the Schengen area. However, those seeking counsel are informed about this fact and of the possible consequences in anonymous return counselling sessions.

## 4.4 Contents of the information

Having described in the past three chapters the actors participating in the dissemination of information, the channels of communication used by them and their accessibility as well as the presentation of these information channels, in a final step we will now set the contents communicated into relation with the channels of information and the individual actors. The following table presentation shows which contents are made available by which actors via what channels of information (cf. Table 11). This table reflects the information that could be collected during the limited span of time available for researching this study, and makes no claim to be exhaustive. Particular actors and projects are mentioned by way of example, and could be supplemented by other actors and projects, which however had to be omitted for reasons of presentation.

The illustration is further restricted as concerns the further dissemination-of-information actors that were mentioned in Chapter 4.1.2 and Table 9, such as religious groups, migrant organisations, social workers (individual case advisors, street workers, homeless aid), law offices, physicians, education and further training facilities and other non-profit and social facilities. Their commitment spans the communication of information on voluntary return projects, the referral to return counselling centres and the distribution of information material in their facilities. Although in select cases they do take over return counselling tasks beyond what has been mentioned (Ministerium des Innern Sachsen-Anhalt: 2012), or they are integrated as cooperation partners in Federal State-specific return projects (cf. Hamburg-Ghana-Bridge), they typically

44 Website of the Hamburg Refugee Centre with address, opening hours and Google Maps embedded for the cartographical illustration of the counselling centre's location: [www.fz-hh.de/de/kontakt.php](http://www.fz-hh.de/de/kontakt.php) (2.07.2010).



Table 11: Contents, actors and channels of the dissemination of information on the possibilities of voluntary return

Information on:	Governmental counselling centres and projects responsible for return (e.g. BAMF/ZIRF, TIA, Ministries, foreigners authorities, URA 2, etc.)	International and government-tasked, non-governmental institutions for return counselling or projects (e.g. IOM, Central Return Counselling Offices for Refugees)	Non-government-tasked, non-governmental return counselling organisations (e.g. welfare organisations, NGOs)	Network and exchange platforms (e.g. BeNIP, CSI, ERSO, IntegPlan, Counselling Office Trier)
The legal obligations of the returnee (i.e. their status, their obligation to return and how they can ensure compliance with return decisions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leaflets/fact sheets (BAMF in the event of a rejected asylum application and leaflets on individual projects, LAB NI)</li> <li>Websites (BAMF/ZIRF/ministries of the Federal States)</li> <li>Social media (TIA)</li> <li>Media work (BAMF, Federal Ministry of the Interior)</li> <li>Personal counselling (foreigners authorities and ZIRF)</li> <li>Studies/reports (Schneider/Kreienbrink 2010)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leaflets/fact sheets (Central Return Counselling Offices for Refugees)</li> <li>Websites (IOM, Central Return Counselling Offices for Refugees)</li> <li>Media work (IOM-REAG/GARP, IOM Reintegration Assistance Vietnam)</li> <li>Personal counselling (IOM, Central Return Counselling Offices for Refugees)</li> <li>Conference &amp; training (IOM, Central Return Counselling Offices for Refugees)</li> <li>Studies/reports (e.g. IOM 2015a)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leaflets/fact sheets (e.g. Solwodi)</li> <li>Websites (e.g. Diakonie Cologne)</li> <li>Social media RECEA, GGUA)</li> <li>Personal counselling (e.g. non-statutory welfare organisations)</li> <li>Studies/reports (inter alia Raphaelswerk 2015)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Websites (Trier Counselling Office)</li> <li>Conference &amp; training (inter alia BeNIP, IntegPlan, counselling office of the Diakonie Trier und Simmern-Trarbach)</li> </ul>
Information on AVR(R) programmes available (overview)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leaflets/fact sheets (BAMF in the event of a rejected asylum application)</li> <li>Websites (ministries of the Federal States)</li> <li>Personal counselling (foreigners authorities and ZIRF)</li> <li>Studies/reports (Schneider/Kreienbrink 2010)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal counselling (IOM, Central Return Counselling Offices for Refugees)</li> <li>Websites (IOM, Central Return Counselling Offices for Refugees)</li> <li>Conference &amp; training (IOM, Central Return Counselling Offices for Refugees)</li> <li>Studies/reports (e.g. IOM 2015a)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Websites (e.g. Diakonie Cologne)</li> <li>Personal counselling (e.g. non-statutory welfare organisations)</li> <li>Studies/reports (inter alia Diakonie 2006, BAGFW 2006)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Websites (Trier Counselling Office)</li> <li>Conference &amp; training (inter alia BeNIP, IntegPlan, counselling office of the Diakonie Trier und Simmern-Trarbach)</li> </ul>
Information on eligibility conditions for AVR(R) programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leaflets/fact sheets (inter alia Coming Home)</li> <li>Websites (ministries of the Federal States, LAB NI)</li> <li>Personal counselling (foreigners authorities and ZIRF)</li> <li>Studies/reports (Schneider/Kreienbrink 2010)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leaflets/fact sheets (IOM, Central Return Counselling Offices for Refugees)</li> <li>Websites (IOM, Central Return Counselling Offices for Refugees)</li> <li>Personal counselling (IOM, Central Return Counselling Offices for Refugees)</li> <li>Conference &amp; training (IOM, Central Return Counselling Offices for Refugees)</li> <li>Studies/reports (e.g. IOM 2015b)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Websites (e.g. Diakonie Cologne, Hamburg Refugee Centre)</li> <li>Personal counselling (e.g. non-statutory welfare organisations)</li> <li>Studies, reports (e.g. RECEA)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Websites (Trier Counselling Office)</li> <li>Conference &amp; training (inter alia BeNIP, IntegPlan, counselling office of the Diakonie Trier und Simmern-Trarbach)</li> </ul>
Referral to (other) counselling centres (e.g. contact data/directions)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leaflets/fact sheets (BAMF in the event of a rejected asylum application)</li> <li>Websites (ministries of the Federal States, BAMF/ZIRF)</li> <li>Personal counselling (foreigners authorities and ZIRF)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Websites (IOM, Central Return Counselling Offices for Refugees)</li> <li>Personal counselling (IOM, Central Return Counselling Offices for Refugees)</li> <li>Media work (IOM-ReintegrAction, Central Return Counselling Offices for Refugees)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Websites (e.g. Diakonie Cologne, JADWIGA)</li> <li>Personal counselling (e.g. non-statutory welfare organisations)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Websites (Trier Counselling Office)</li> <li>Conference &amp; training (inter alia BeNIP, IntegPlan, counselling office of the Diakonie Trier)</li> </ul>
Other voluntary return options (e.g. options for voluntary return without assistance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leaflets/fact sheets (BAMF in the event of a rejected asylum application)</li> <li>Websites (BAMF/ZIRF, BA/ZAV)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Websites (IOM, Central Return Counselling Offices for Refugees)</li> <li>Personal counselling (IOM, Central Return Counselling Offices for Refugees)</li> <li>Conference &amp; training (IOM, Central Return Counselling Offices for Refugees)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Websites (e.g. Diakonie Cologne)</li> <li>Personal counselling (e.g. non-statutory welfare organisations)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Websites (Trier Counselling Office)</li> <li>Conference &amp; training (BeNIP)</li> </ul>
What the person can expect at the airport or border on returning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal counselling the foreigners authorities, LAB NI and return projects (URA 2)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal counselling (IOM Reintegration Assistance Vietnam, Central Return Counselling Offices for Refugees)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Websites (e.g. Diakonie Cologne)</li> <li>Personal counselling (inter alia Solwodi, AWO Nuremberg, RECEA)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conference &amp; training (ERSO, IntegPlan)</li> </ul>
What the person can expect in the country of return (e.g. labour market, housing, health, etc.)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal counselling e.g. in the context of return projects (inter alia URA 2)</li> <li>Studies/reports (Coming Home 2015)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal counselling (IOM Reintegration Assistance Vietnam, Central Return Counselling Offices for Refugees)</li> <li>Studies, reports (e.g. IOM Reintegration Assistance Vietnam)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Websites (e.g. Diakonie Cologne)</li> <li>Personal counselling (e.g. Hamburg-Ghana-Bridge, JADWIGA, AWO Nuremberg, Solwodi)</li> <li>Studies, reports (e.g. RECEA)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conference &amp; training (ERSO, IntegPlan)</li> </ul>
Personal counselling, individual tailored information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal counselling e.g. in reintegration projects (inter alia URA 2, RACOB)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal counselling (IOM, Central Return Counselling Offices for Refugees, SIREADA)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personal counselling (inter alia non-statutory welfare organisations, RECEA)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conference &amp; training (BeNIP, IntegPlan, Trier Counselling Office)</li> </ul>

Source: own research, websites, leaflets, reports on the individual actors and projects and interviews with individual return counselling centres.



do not provide their own information material or websites on return counselling activities, which is why they will not receive a separate listing as actors in the table below. The table instead focuses on four groups of actors: a) governmental actors and projects responsible for returns and certain return projects, b) non-governmental organisations and non-statutory welfare organisations that are government-tasked to conduct return counselling and/or return projects, c) non-government-tasked, non-governmental organisations which are responsible for return counselling or return projects, and d) network and exchange platforms.

## 5 Information strategy pursued by the 'Reintegration Assistance for Returnees to Vietnam' project (Berlin)

Having illustrated in a general and condensed manner and placed into perspective in the chapters above the channels through which information is provided, as well as the main actors in the dissemination of information and the contents communicated, this fifth chapter will describe a specific return project and its information strategy in detail and trace a timeline since its establishment. To this end, the Berlin Reintegration Assistance for Returnees to Vietnam, for which IOM is responsible, seemed an obvious choice since it is still a young project, it is focused on a specific target group<sup>45</sup> that is relevant in the regional context and remains limited in the range of funding to persons from Berlin – a model which serves or may serve in the future as an example for other (regional) projects in Germany (cf. *inter alia* Hamburg-Ghana-Bridge).

The reintegration project is linked to the information and return counselling centre of the IOM in Berlin, which was established 2006, and has been funded in equal parts by the RF and the Berlin Senate Administration of the Interior and Sport since its establishment in 2012. Furthermore, in 2015 the Brandenburg Ministry of the Interior and Municipal Affairs became involved, and the project began receiving funding also from the AMIF and the participating Federal States. The project is aimed at all Vietnamese persons in Berlin who are willing to return, persons without any established residence status, and explicitly also

at irregular migrants. 15 persons already returned to Vietnam through the project in the first year after its establishment. 19 out of the 19 approved places were taken in both 2013 and 2014. On account of the high demand, the project applied for 26 return places for 2015 and for a total of 20 for 2016.

Besides the REAG/GARP benefits (e.g. plane ticket, 200 € in financial travel benefits and 300 € in initial aid), the returnees receive up to 2,000 €, which may be used upon return for “activities to generate an income, for formal education or training, medical support or improvement of the housing situation” (IOM 2013a: 2). The returnees receive individual counselling prior to their return, for which a Vietnamese-speaking social worker is available who was recruited especially for this project. In order to implement the individual reintegration plan in Vietnam, staff members of two IOM offices in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City support returnees in Vietnam.<sup>46</sup>

The following in-depth discussion on the reintegration project's information strategies are based on an interview with project staff that was held in the IOM information and return counselling centre in Berlin, two interviews with staff from the IOM branch in Nuremberg, large amounts of project information material (brochures, leaflets, posters, printed and online

<sup>45</sup> There were 13,622 Vietnamese nationals living in Berlin in 2012, representing the seventh-largest group of foreigners (Amt für Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg 2012). In the same year – the year the reintegration project was established – Vietnamese nationals already made up one in every four voluntary returns from Berlin (IOM 2013: 2).

<sup>46</sup> The returnees are furthermore surveyed by IOM Vietnam staff on their return experiences twice during the first year, and the reintegration process is evaluated at least for this span of time. Some of the results of these surveys can be found in the German-language brochure entitled “*Rückkehr nach Vietnam – Hilfe für den Neuanfang*” (Returning to Vietnam – Help to make a new start) (IOM 2013).

articles and advertisements) and an IOM discussion paper on information activities regarding the opportunities of voluntary return in Germany, which also addresses the "Reintegration Assistance for Returnees to Vietnam" project (IOM 2014).

The accounts of the project staff members suggested a distinction into two phases when it comes to the approaches of the dissemination of information: On the one hand, there is the initial phase of the project, during which the primary aim was to familiarise the target group and the relevant actors in return counselling in Berlin with the project in the first place; on the other hand, there is the current phase of an established project and the question of which measures are necessary in order to maintain a steady flow of information.

### **Provision of information during the project establishment phase**

A deliberate decision was made at the beginning of the project to employ a Vietnamese-speaking social worker in the return counselling centre in Berlin, "so that Vietnamese nationals willing to return can receive counselling in their mother tongue" (IOM 2013a: 2; 'native counsellor' concept, IOM 2015c: 21). In the course of her employment, she was given responsibility for several essential tasks in the dissemination of information. She assumed the role of a 'gate keeper' in that she established contacts with potential returnees and multipliers in the Vietnamese community (e.g. at markets, migrant organisations and hostels). At the onset of the project, she and a further staff member from the return counselling centre distributed Vietnamese-language information material at several locations in Berlin where the potential target group was assumed to be found. This included hostels in which predominantly Vietnamese nationals lived, but also the Dong Xuan Center<sup>47</sup>, a Vietnamese wholesale market in Berlin. They had personal talks with individuals whom they encountered at these locations, but also with multipliers such as the director of the wholesale market and individual shop owners. They were initially received with suspicion in the hostels and had to assure their interlocutors that they were

not from the foreigners authority and that they guaranteed the anonymity of those to whom they spoke. At the wholesale market, they were in turn confronted with a negative attitude on the part of individual shop owners, which turned out after a while to be the result of concerns that the return project could lead to a loss of potential customers in the market. In both contexts, the Vietnamese-speaking staff member ultimately managed to gain the trust of several individuals so that information could be passed on orally or through the distribution of information materials. The first group of persons interested in returning visited the counselling centre shortly thereafter.

At the same time, leaflets were distributed at various job and health fairs and a discussion forum was established to which members of the Senate, of non-governmental organisations primarily active in return counselling, of IOM and other individuals were invited. The purpose of the discussion forum was to provide information on the reintegration project as such, as well as to enable an exchange regarding possible challenges in both the phase of preparation for return in Germany and that of reintegration in Vietnam.

Furthermore, certain media published in Berlin and Germany for the Vietnamese-speaking community were contacted to draw attention to the project and trigger reporting. As a result, articles on the project appeared both online and in print media. In addition, Vietnamese-language advertisements for the reintegration project were run in a print newspaper and on two news websites, the costs of which amounted to a mid-range two-figure Euro sum (cf. examples of advertisements and articles in Appendix 5). In the days following the increased media profile, the staff registered a marked increase in requests for counselling.

The Vietnamese-speaking staff member assumed a further important role during the reintegration planning phase. She was able to personally establish contact with family members in Vietnam and involve them in the process of the decision to return and the planning of return. According to project staff, the timely involvement of the family still living in the country of origin is important for the sustainability of returns because families exert an at times strong social pressure on the persons in Germany who are willing to return for them to in fact stay in Germany. There are cases of more than ten family members in Vietnam de-

<sup>47</sup> Dong Xuan Center, a Vietnamese wholesale market in Berlin: [www.dongxuan-berlin.de](http://www.dongxuan-berlin.de) (02.06.2015).

pending on remittances from the person (irregularly-) staying in Germany in order to maintain their livelihood. In such cases, the possibility of a financially-supported return and start-up is discussed with the family, thus winning trust and acceptance for the return. The family members can furthermore be involved in the planning of a start-up as they often have important knowledge regarding the local market conditions.

also comes to a positive conclusion with regard to the dissemination of information. Meanwhile, interest in the return project is said to be carried mainly by word of mouth, and the project staff rarely have to become active themselves (IOM 2014: 9).

## **Dissemination of information in the established reintegration project**

An important hurdle for the establishment of trust and the acceptance of counselling as well as the dissemination of information was cleared when the first persons had returned through the reintegration project and afterwards reported of their experiences to those remaining in Germany. This led in the following three and a half years to progressively growing trust in the project and return counselling so that, according to the project staff, the reintegration project has now come to the attention of the staff of other return counselling centres in Berlin, as well as of the foreigners authority, the Berlin police and embassy staff, and it was possible to ensure a cooperative relationship (see Chapter 6 on the challenges regarding the dissemination of information and enabling returns). Many Vietnamese nationals living in Berlin are now likewise aware of the reintegration project – especially those who have a mediating role in the community and who assume pivotal positions in community life. When they hear that a person is thinking of returning, they can direct that person's attention towards return counselling and pass on information material – spreading information by word of mouth makes it most likely to also and especially reach irregular migrants and illiterate persons. As regards information material, the reintegration project offers a 12-page German-language glossy brochure which presents seven portraits of returned founders of businesses and important information on the project (IOM 2013a), and leaflets as well as posters containing information on the project. The material is available in Vietnamese and German, and is on display at locations such as the Berlin foreigners authority.

From the perspective of the staff who were interviewed, the development of the project and the flow of information were described as the result of an ultimately successful strategy. The evaluation report

## 6 Challenges of the dissemination of information and return counselling

In the course of the interviews with governmental, inter-governmental and non-governmental actors conducted as part of this study, challenges in the dissemination of information on the opportunities of voluntary return were identified on two levels in particular: On the one hand, there is a strong regional discrepancy regarding how well informed the staff members of governmental counselling centres are and how easily they can be reached (especially the foreigners authorities and Social Welfare Offices). On the other hand, there were challenges with regard to the individual status groups among irregularly-staying third-country nationals (registered persons who are obliged to leave the country/absconders/third-country nationals without prior contact with the authorities).

### 6.1 Region-specific challenges

An extensive return counselling network of governmental and non-governmental actors has established itself in many Federal States and regions throughout Germany over the past decades. Besides the positive effect of providing access within reach for irregularly-staying third-country nationals, this network furthermore enables a steady exchange of information and experience between the counselling centres and other actors involved, as for example in Baden-Württemberg, Bavaria, Hamburg, North Rhine-Westphalia and Rhineland-Palatinate. According to the interviewees, it is more likely to be ensured in these Federal States that the counselling centres are up to date in relevant matters, and that they thus pass on valid and topical information on existing voluntary return projects and act promptly and professionally within potential deadlines for departures. A higher concentration of counselling centres is furthermore said to foster the sensitisation and information of authorities involved in the return process regarding the possibility of voluntary return as such.

The concentration of counselling centres is however lower in other Federal States and regions. In some cases there is a particular lack of non-governmental counselling centres throughout large parts of the respective Federal State (thus e.g. in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Saxony and until April 2015 also in Brandenburg<sup>48</sup>). Non-governmental actors are however described to be favoured and better approachable, in particular by absconders and persons without prior contact with the authorities, since they guarantee anonymity and that counselling takes place in an open-ended manner which includes non-return as an option. In contrast, governmental return counselling centres focus on the compliance of the obligation to leave the federal territory, so that in the event of a voluntary return failing (e.g. in the case of a lack of eligibility for funding), a forced return is imposed. Furthermore, especially the foreigners authorities and Social Welfare Offices of smaller and medium-sized districts and smaller cities with district status are said to be confronted by the challenge of staff members only seldom having contact with migrants who are willing or obliged to return, and therefore being relatively inexperienced when it comes to applying for funding or passport substitutes, and moreover that they do not have a sufficient grasp of the diversity of funding possibilities with regard to voluntary return projects.

There are also major differences from region to region in some cases when it comes to the willingness of the authorities involved to cooperate and to make flexible use of the opportunities that the law provides for voluntary return. While, because of their greater degree of experience, especially the foreigners authorities and the police in urban areas showed a greater willingness to cooperate in enabling irregular migrants to

<sup>48</sup> An IOM information and return counselling centre was established in Eisenhüttenstadt in 2015.

return voluntarily, willingness to cooperate was said to be lacking in some rural and small-town areas. This holds true for example for the police record check and fingerprinting that is obligatory for irregularly-staying third-country nationals who want to return via AVR(R) packages. Depending on the crime in question, a criminal record or being wanted by the police for a crime can be a criterion for exclusion from voluntary return. In every case, potential criminal offences must first be resolved or – as the interviewees said was more often the case – outstanding bills (in particular penalties for fare evasion) had to be paid before a voluntary return could be permitted. The staff in the responsible authorities would need to be appropriately trained in order to actually make exhaustive use of the legal possibilities pertaining to the precedence of voluntary return and, for example, to react more flexibly to potential delays within the prescribed period for departure by extending the deadline. If experience and exchange with other actors is lacking, a forced return is often planned instead.

## 6.2 Status-specific challenges

Besides regional differences, the interviewees report that there are numerous status-specific challenges with regard to the dissemination of information on the possibilities of voluntary return for persons obliged to leave the country, absconders and persons without prior contact with the authorities.

Interviewees report that the dissemination of information is not a central challenge with regard to *third-country nationals who are obliged to leave the country* and who still maintain contact with the authorities and have not yet exceeded the period allowed for departure, or who live at a permanent registered address in Germany with temporary suspension of deportation status. The obligation to leave and the frequently limited willingness to return voluntarily are cited as the real challenges, which in turn leads to difficulties in getting information across because the persons concerned do not want to leave the country. The question of voluntariness is said to be restricted primarily to the choice between assisted departure and forced return, which often limits counsellors to explaining the different consequences of the individual forms of return. Thus, for example, a forced return typically goes hand in hand with a several-year ban on re-entry. Furthermore, in the event of re-entry, the

person concerned must reimburse the costs for deportation (Kohls 2014). In contrast, voluntary departure did not incur a re-entry ban until 31 July 2015. However, since the law on the recast of the right to stay and the termination of residence came into force on 1 August 2015, this asset was partly repealed. According to section 11 No. 7 sentence 1 of the Residence Act a re-entry ban may be imposed e.g. on rejected applicants for international protection, who are not granted subsidiary protection or a temporary suspension of deportation (section 60 subs. 5 or 7 of the Residence Act) and who do not possess a lawful residence permit. Effects of these changes to the law could not be assessed at the time of completion of this study. However, voluntary return still holds several further assets, such as voluntary returnees can plan their time of departure, route, collection and accommodation in the destination country beforehand in cooperation with the authorities (Flüchtlingsrat Niedersachsen 2014: 85; Diakonie 2006: 6).

The period allowed for departure represents a further challenge. The preparation of a voluntary return may take longer in individual cases than the period of 30 days generally allowed for departure (cf. Chapter 3.1). Much is said to depend here on the level of empathy on the part of the foreigners authorities for the personal circumstances of those obliged to return and the willingness of the foreigners authorities to grant an extension of the deadline as provided by law. The degree to which the actors are informed and sensitised, which could be fostered through training and the dissemination of information to counsellors, play an important role here as well (cf. regional challenges).

With regard to absconded third-country nationals, government actors in particular emphasise that establishing contact and providing information early on is essential. Unlike among the population without prior contact with the authorities, it is possible to proactively provide absconders with basic information on the option of a voluntary return before they abscond. The possibilities for providing information to people after they have already absconded are limited and involve a considerable effort. With regard to this, the Coordination Agency for 'Integrated Return Management' of the Federal Government and the Federal States has proposed providing initial, general information on the possibilities of voluntary return immediately after reception.

With regard to *absconded migrants*, non-governmental counselling centres emphasise a different challenge: the question of official responsibility for the absconded migrants in the event of their re-emergence or apprehension. In the case of an apprehension, the foreigners authority where the absconded person was last registered in Germany is generally responsible for the further procedure. Especially when it comes to asylum-seekers who have absconded, this can affect every district or city with district status in Germany to which an asylum-seeker was allotted e.g. through the EASY process (cf. Chapter 2.2.1). If for example an absconded person gets in touch with a return counselling centre, they may receive counselling there, but they may be obliged to first return to the foreigners authority responsible for them in another Federal State for the funding and organisation of their return to their country of origin. The Federal State in which the person is currently situated may declare itself willing to assume responsibility for the return of the person who has been apprehended, but it would then also have to meet the costs for the return.

However, such a take-over is not always approved. As a result, the person principally willing to return goes back to the responsible foreigners authority, which may perhaps have gathered only little experience with the possibilities of voluntary return and may not have an independent counselling centre in its vicinity. The foreigners authority then orders the deportation of the person concerned, and furthermore files for detention pending deportation at the local court, possibly because the third-country national in question had already absconded once before (cf. also Tietze 2008: 105 on the problems in voluntary return due to questions of responsibility and bureaucratic hurdles).

### 6.3 Situation-specific challenges

A further challenge mentioned by those interviewed regarding the dissemination of information concerns not so much the dissemination of information to the returnees themselves, but rather its communication among family members in the country of origin and the sensitivity and empathy on the part of the return counsellors with regard to the living conditions of the persons willing or obliged to leave the country in the country of origin (cf. Chapter 5). If return is possible through a reintegration project, the family in

the country of origin can be involved in planning the return and, for example, in a business start-up beforehand. Furthermore, those interviewed said, it was possible to secure social support or contribute to a higher degree of acceptance regarding the decision, which they argue is particularly important in order to ensure sustainable reintegration. Native speakers working in return counselling centres proved especially helpful in this context, since they are not only more approachable for potential returnees, but can also provide important communication services in coordinating things with the family in the country of origin, local NGOs or businesses (cf. in detail Chapter 5).

Finally, one further point deserves mention which relates not only to the dissemination of information by the counsellors, but also to the recording of information by the counsellors during the counselling sessions. This concerns the capacities, the sensitivity and the sincerity of the counsellors to sympathise with returnees' special needs and circumstances. The following case provides a good example for illustrating how important individual counselling, sincerity and a cooperative exchange of information between all those participating in the return process can be:

A young man from a West African nation approaches a return counselling centre. He has been living in Germany for several years and has been irregularly-staying from the beginning. Until recently, he had been working in construction to finance his stay in Germany, and was also able to support his family in his country of origin through his remittances. He has not been able to go to work for weeks because of a knee injury. He is furthermore weak, and is tired of life in illegality. He would like to return to his country of origin. The counselling centre examines which measures of return assistance are available and finds a suitable reintegration project through which he could receive not only initial aid but also a subsidy for a small business in the destination country. The young man concerned can imagine returning under these conditions, but he mentions a further problem: He fears the judgment of his family and of his family's friends in his country of origin, who would neither understand nor accept a voluntary return. They depend on his remittances, and as a returnee he will be stigmatised in his country of origin as having



failed because he ‘didn’t make it’ in Germany – unlike those who continue to regularly support the subsistence of their families in their country of origin through remittances. In the worst case, he is faced with the threat of becoming a social outcast. He therefore asks whether a voluntary return through the reintegration project could be declared as deportation in order to give the impression upon his return that he had been forced to return, which would raise his standing in his country of origin. The counselling centre discusses the matter with the responsible foreigners authority and the responsible police authority, and makes it possible to disguise the voluntary return as if it were a forced return. The return takes place only a few weeks later.<sup>49</sup>

The importance of personal and open-ended counselling, as well as a sensitive and open attitude on the part of the counsellors in the face of at times adverse conditions which becomes obvious in the case described above, is also emphasised in the Hamburg guidelines for refugee counselling<sup>50</sup>:

“In our experience, the key feature of the professional work with the target group of persons with uncertain residence status is that general counselling concepts and methods cannot be readily applied in the face of specific situations. In fact, current general counselling approaches in return and onward migration counselling must be adapted according to the experiences and insights gained in practice. In doing so, it is important to combine aspects of existing counselling and aid concepts, to apply them flexibly in counselling and yet to structure and standardise the entire counselling and support process (counselling standards). Due to the special situations

of the refugees, the ambivalence of return and onward migration and the participation or regulation of various authorities and organisations, different options for the future often have to be pursued at once while the needs and wishes of the clients must always be reintroduced flexibly into the planning with regard to the specific events (e.g. change of residence status, sudden notification of deportation, etc.). Persons with uncertain residence status are seldom able to plan with certainty; their ways of life are ‘plurilocal’, and they are subject to ‘multiple discrimination’. The counselling practice thus often involves dealing with uncertainty and unplanability” (Littmann 2007: 22; see also Tietze 2008: 104).

Two levels thus prove to be essential for the dissemination of information on the possibilities of voluntary return: On the one hand, that all the authorities involved in the return process be informed and sensitive, and that they should be willing to make full use of the possibilities provided by the law in order to enable the voluntary return; and, on the other hand, the channels and strategies of providing irregular migrants with the necessary information on the possibilities of voluntary return. It is important that both counsellors and the clients be informed and sensitised.

## 6.4 Financial challenges and planning reliability of project work

Counsellors revealed that the mixed funding of a large share of the counselling centres and reintegration projects described in Chapter 4.1.4 has made the counselling possible in the first place, but also makes it difficult to plan with any certainty. Not only does the repeated application for follow-up funding consume important resources, the funding commitments over one, sometimes several years impedes the binding of qualified staff who are familiar with the subject-matter of voluntary return and at the same time are sufficiently experienced in personal counselling. In addition, Schneider and Kreienbrink emphasise in their study on return assistance in Germany that “project funding by applying for public money from EU Funds” represents “an obstacle to sustainability due to the brief development and effect spans, as well as taking up considerable administrative recourses in the application process and accounting. Various sources there-

49 The case description is based on a real case reported on by a staff member of a return counselling centre in the interview that was carried out within this project.

50 The refugee advice guideline was drawn up within the project ‘future opportunities for refugees and qualified return’ (Zukunftschancen für Flüchtlinge und qualifizierte Rückkehr), which was carried out by the non-profit *Zentrale Information und Beratung für Flüchtlinge gGmbH*, and the project ‘Weiterwanderung und Integrationsperspektiven’ implemented by the Caritasverband für Hamburg e. V. They were sub-projects of the EQUAL development partnership *Fluchtort Hamburg – berufliche Qualifizierung für Flüchtlinge* (Littmann 2007).

fore argue for the possibility of stabilising these project-related services and giving them a regular place in the budgets of the Federal States and the municipalities” (Schneider/Kreienbrink 2010: 95). It should therefore be investigated to what degree successful projects are granted long-term follow-up funding and best practices can be taken up into the standard repertoire of public funding through the federal or Federal States’ authorities. The EU’s Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund has already facilitated the matter somewhat with regard to the duration of funding insofar as projects are as a matter of principle funded for a term of between one day and a maximum of 36 months, while the European Return Fund was only able to fund projects with a duration of 12 or 36 months.

Secondly, a development can be observed towards increased networking and institutionalisation of the information exchange between governmental and non-governmental actors in voluntary returns on all relevant levels. Thus one can now find networking and exchange structures on international, nationwide, Federal State-wide and municipal levels that do not serve the counselling of potential returnees per se, but which serve the expressed purpose of enabling relevant actors in return policy and counselling to exchange experiences, develop common return policy standards, provide information on existing return projects for return counselling centres and develop and provide skill-building for counsellors in the field (cf. the figure of the structure of actors in Chapter 4.1).

## 6.5 Lessons learned and outlook

Two main developments can be discerned among the changes in assisted voluntary return that are in planning or already in the process of being developed and negotiated and which also tackle the dissemination of information to (irregularly-staying) third-country nationals. First, the work of the Coordination Agency for ‘Integrated Return Management’ of the Federal Government and the Federal States deserves mention. Time will tell here what concepts for the planned stronger linking of measures in return (voluntary return, reintegration and forced return) will be developed, how the planned closer networking between the various actors in the political arena should be brought about, and what form the planned harmonised standards and guidelines for voluntary return counselling and reintegration assistance will take (Landtag Nordrhein-Westfalen 2015: 2 et seq., SPD 2015). Further measures for reinforcing voluntary return which are being discussed in the Coordination Agency for ‘Integrated Return Management’ of the Federal Government and the Federal States are the legal anchoring of the promotion of voluntary return – a demand that is also voiced by certain Federal States (BLK IRM 2015: 1; Innenministerium des Landes Schleswig-Holstein 2014: 4), the development of return counselling services nationwide, initial counselling on the possibilities of voluntary return at the earliest possible time, and the development of harmonised quality standards for return counselling.

# 7 Conclusion

The few federal and Federal State-level legal provisions regarding voluntary return in general and the regulations regarding the dissemination of information on the possibilities of voluntary return in particular may offer the actors involved in return counselling a great deal of leeway regarding their actions, their arrangements and their information strategies. However, this currently also leads to significant regional differences nationwide in the concentration of counselling centres, the individual actors' willingness and ability to cooperate and the extent of their knowledge and experience on voluntary return programmes and reintegration projects. This may lead to a situation where a person would have been able to depart voluntarily via AVR(R) packages in one place, while somewhere else he or she would be forcefully returned on account of multiple factors. This and the other challenges identified as well as the differences in the dissemination of information by the individual actors make it clear that at present enabling a voluntary return is not equally possible nationwide. Important influencing variables became apparent in the above chapters, such as the degree of information and the practical knowledge of the actors involved in the return process, which also bears upon their willingness and ability to cooperate; and, secondly, the accessibility of information for those (irregular staying) third country nationals willing to return and those obliged to leave the country. In conclusion, a few alternative courses of action regarding these two variables will be discussed which emerged from the interviews with the relevant actors as well as from the full consideration of the results of this study.

## **The degree of information and knowledge on the possibilities of voluntary return gained through the experience of the authorities involved**

Besides skill-building for the actors involved in the return process on a broad scale, the centralisation of return counselling or the establishment of networking and exchange centres on a Federal State or regional level should be contemplated. The regional or indeed

supra-regional centralisation of return counselling and the dissemination of information could follow the example of the Bavarian Central Return Counselling Offices for Refugees model or the Hamburg Refugee Centre model. This can enable the central authority responsible for return counselling to expand its practical knowledge with regard to dealing with individual, administrative and organisational challenges and test solution strategies and best practices.

An alternative to centralisation worth examining would be the establishment of networking and exchange centres after the model of the Rhineland-Palatinate counselling office of the Diakonie of Trier and Simmern-Trarbach Evangelical Church district, which serves the 36 municipal bodies and authorities responsible for return counselling there as a consulting, skill-building, exchange and information entity. The authorities responsible in the municipalities thus receive a contact point for their questions. The central authority itself can coordinate the drafting and systematisation of information material, conduct training, organise roundtables to increase the will to cooperate and potential for cooperation between the actors involved, channel experiences in contacting embassies and consulates to obtain passports and practical assistance in the application for funds.

A contribution could be made in centralised counselling centres as well as in networking and exchange centres to the exchange of information among the actors involved in the return process in order to ultimately also increase the ability and willingness of all actors involved to cooperate. Here especially the counselling centres, foreigners authorities, law courts, police of the Federal States and Federal Police, the embassies and consulates must be considered as important actors alongside the persons who are willing to return and/or obliged to leave the country. Furthermore, such central counselling centres and networking and exchange centres could bring together the relevant actors involved in the return process in order to develop standard guidelines for the Federal State or regional level and/or to contribute to the implementa-

tion of future nationwide counselling and dissemination-of-information standards and adapt these to the respective regional context.

### **The accessibility of up-to-date information on voluntary return assistance programmes and reintegration projects**

The analysis of the channels of information has shown that the rather long tradition of voluntary return has not only produced a large number of actors involved, but also a wide variety of sources of information. On the governmental side, there is the ZIRF database with its vast range of information. On the non-governmental side, the project website of the Diakonie Cologne, which offers particularly comprehensive information on the topic of voluntary return, deserves particular mention. Both websites are in turn recommended as sources of information by numerous other actors in voluntary return, which is an indicator of the fundamental demand for the concentrated dissemination of information. The fact, however, that a website of the Diakonie Cologne that has not been updated since late 2012 is still being referred to in turn indicates a lack of an adequate and up-to-date alternative.

It would be worth considering at this point whether the interests of the governmental and non-governmental actors involved in voluntary return are so divergent that the individual actors each need to produce their own information on nationwide, Federal State-wide and regional assisted return programmes and reintegration projects, or whether it would not be possible to make more use of synergies and set up a joint information platform.

# Appendix

## A 1: The number of third-country nationals who have returned (2010-2014)

Table 12: The number of third-country nationals who have returned (2010-2014)

	Year (total)					Source	Methods applied to determine the number/estimate and the assumed accuracy of the data
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014		
Third-country nationals forcibly removed after notice of deportation (deportations and removals)	15,052	12,185	11,098	13,645	12,844	Deutscher Bundes-tag 2015, 2014b, 2013a, 2012, 2011	Data of the Federal Police and the Federal State authorities responsible.
Third-country nationals who voluntarily departed within the period allowed them for departure (voluntary returns)	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Irregularly-staying third-country nationals who left the country via REAG/GARP (besides transportation costs also with financial travel benefits and/or initial aid)	3,445 (3,038)	5,016 (2,108)	3,963 (1,938)	8,019 (2,409)	10,464 (3,238)	IOM	Irregularly-staying third-country nationals are not separately registered under REAG/GARP or in the statistics. The data in the table approximate those population groups among whom an irregular stay is to be expected. Counted among this group in this table are third-country nationals in possession of temporary suspension of deportation status in accordance with Section 60a of the Residence Act; those who are enforceably obliged to leave the country, even when a notification of deportation is not yet or is no longer enforceable; who filed a follow-up application in accordance with Section 71 of the Asylum Procedure Act or a second application in accordance with Section 71a of the Asylum Procedure Act (here only asylum-seekers who have already been once more rejected); rejected applicants for asylum who were in possession of permission to reside at the time of the application. All persons were furthermore in possession of at least a border crossing certificate at the time of departure, and were thus known to the German authorities at least for the return process.
Irregularly-staying third-country nationals who departed through a voluntary return and reintegration project (travel costs plus reintegration benefits)	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns

Table 13: Number of irregularly-staying third-country nationals not in contact with the authorities (2010-2014)

	Year				Source	Methods applied to determine the number/estimate and the assumed accuracy of the data
	2010 (total)	2011 (total)	2012 (total)	2013 (total)	2014 (total)	
Relocations to an unknown address as an indicator of absconded third-country nationals (all resident statuses; not incl. deportations, removals and refusals of entry)	27,722	24,728	27,476	30,974	49,465	AZR  The Central Register of Foreigners (AZR) registers all foreign nationals resident in Germany who have moved to an unknown address – i.e. persons whose place of residence became unknown to the authorities after a certain point in time and whom the authorities were unable to contact. This concerns not only third-country nationals with uncertain legal residence status (e.g. without a residence permit), but also foreign nationals with secure status who relocated to an unknown address (e.g. who have a settlement permit). It should furthermore be noted with regard to the data that they assess third-country nationals who were registered as having relocated to an unknown address in the respective year (2010-2014) and still were so by the cut-off date 30.04.2015. Where a person was registered as having relocated to an unknown address in 2010 and re-entered the scope of the authorities in 2013, this person no longer counts as having relocated to an unknown address.
Relocations to an unknown address as an indicator of absconded third-country nationals (only persons with permission to reside or without a residence permit; not incl. deportations, removals and refusals of entry)	12,019	11,838	14,356	16,602	29,438	AZR  see above
Irregularly-staying third-country nationals (only persons without prior contact with the authorities)	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns
Irregularly-staying third-country nationals (absconders and persons without prior contact with the authorities)	136,000-337,000	139,000-381,000	151,000-414,000	160,000-443,000	180,000-520,000	Vogel/ Aßner 2011; Vogel 2015  “The proportion of suspects with the status of ‘illegal’ out of all German (upper limit) or non-German regular suspects (lower limit) is established based on the police crime statistics data, and the irregular population is estimated by a simple multiplication with the corresponding population group (A/B x D = C)”. In doing so, the key assumptions which have received detailed explanation in the study are that persons without the necessary documentation among crimes that are just as likely to have been committed by foreigners as by Germans are overrepresented in the police crime statistics compared to Germans, and are underrepresented compared to foreigners (Vogel/Aßner 2011: 17).

## A 2: Description of data-collection methods used

Table 14: Data-collection methods used

Sources / methods	Used? Yes/No	Specific documents and/or actors	Type of information received
<b>Assessments</b>	Yes	• cf. Bibliography.	• Challenges regarding the implementation of return and other.
<b>Studies</b>	Yes	• cf. Bibliography.	• Overview of legal framework and practical implementation of voluntary return and other.
<b>Other reports</b>	Yes	• cf. Bibliography.	• Task descriptions of certain actors and other.
<b>Legal texts</b>	Yes	• Residence Act ( <i>AufenthG</i> ) and General Administrative Provision on the Residence Act ( <i>AVwVAufenthG</i> ), • Asylum Procedure Act ( <i>AsylVfG</i> ), • BMI Guideline on the Granting of Funds in the Context of the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, • Return Assistance Act ( <i>Rückkehrhilfegesetz</i> ), • Act to Protect Emigrants ( <i>AuswSG</i> ).	• Legal framework of voluntary return and return assistance for irregular third-country nationals and legal status groups (including German emigrants), • Responsibilities of authorities, • EU funding guidelines for voluntary return projects.
<b>Political position papers</b>	Yes	• cf. Bibliography	• Critique of existing structures and implementation of return processes and suggestions for change and other.
<b>Test runs</b>	Yes	• Search engine test search in English and German for information on voluntary return (for irregularly-staying third-country nationals).	• Access to information on possibilities of voluntary return via search engines and websites.
<b>Interviews with relevant actors</b>	Yes	• Staff of the IOM Branch in Nuremberg, • Staff the IOM information and return counselling centre in Berlin, focus on 'Reintegration Assistance for Returnees to Vietnam', • With several staff members of welfare organisations working in return counselling at the annual convention on 'Illegality' 2015 in Berlin, • Staff members of Division 212 at the BAMF (International cooperation projects, returns).	• REAG/GARP statistics, • Information on the process of a counselling session with irregular migrants and hurdles/challenges in the implementation, • Challenges and strategies in the dissemination of information, • Communication of evaluation and information brochures, posters, newspaper articles and advertisements.
<b>Consultation with relevant actors</b>	Yes	• Coordination Agency for 'Integrated Return Management' of the Federal Government and the Federal States, • ZIRF, • BAMF liaison personnel, • Central Register of Foreigners.	• Planning status in 'Integrated return management', • BAMF/ZIRF information sheet on voluntary return project that is sent out with the leaflet to inform about the rejected application for international protection, • Current developments in URA 2 return project, • Data on third-country nationals who are obliged to leave the country or who have absconded.
<b>Consultation with national EMN network</b>	Yes	• Dr Dita Vogel (scholar and expert in the field of irregular migration in Germany).	• Communication of newest estimates of irregularly-staying third-country nationals in Germany and assessment of dissemination of information on possibilities of voluntary return.



### A 3: BAMF-leaflet on assisted voluntary return for rejected applicants for international protection

Rückkehrinformation Englisch, Seite 1/4



Referat 212 – ZIRF  
Zentralstelle für Informationsvermittlung  
Zur Rückkehrförderung  
März 2015

#### **Subject: Voluntary return to your home country**

Dear Sir/Madam,

Your asylum application/follow-up application has been rejected by the Federal Office and you are asked to leave the Federal Republic of Germany within the stated period.

**This leaflet should help you to decide whether you would like to return to your home country voluntarily and permanently or migrate to a third country which is willing to accept you.**

Make use of the opportunity of voluntary return/onward migration so that you can work together with the immigration office to make arrangements and set a date for your departure.

Various support programmes can offer you assistance with travel expenses, start-up aid in the form of financial support and/or a job service and an offer of training.

**Benefits from the support programmes are voluntary benefits to which there is no legal entitlement. No benefits are granted in cases of abuse.**

### **INFORMATION ON SUPPORT PROGRAMMES**

The following support schemes are currently provided for voluntary return to your home country or onward migration to a third country willing to accept you:

#### **a) REAG/GARP Programme**

- The REAG/GARP programme is a humanitarian aid programme set up to help you prepare for and carry out a voluntary return to your home country or onward migration to a third country (willing to accept you).
- The REAG/GARP programme pays for travel costs and travel assistance packages, as well as start-up/reintegration assistance for certain states (*see overview below*).
- For the purposes of information and preparation, refugees and asylum seekers who wish to migrate elsewhere should first contact an information/advice centre (e.g. German Red Cross, Caritas, Diakonie). You will also find the names of repatriation advice centres in your locality on our website [www.zirf.eu](http://www.zirf.eu)
- For general questions on the REAG/GARP programme, please contact

International Organization for Migration (IOM)  
Frankenstr. 210  
D – 90461 Nuremberg  
Tel.: (0911) 43 00 - 0  
Fax: (0911) 43 00 - 260  
E-mail: [IOM-Germany@iom.int](mailto:IOM-Germany@iom.int)  
Internet: [www.iom.int/germany](http://www.iom.int/germany)

**For asylum seekers from Berlin**  
International Organization for Migration (IOM)  
Information and Return Counselling Centre  
in the Aliens Department, House B, GF, Room 67  
Friedrich-Krause-Ufer 24  
D – 13353 Berlin  
Tel.: (030) 90269 – 4848  
E-mail: [IOM-Germany@iom.int](mailto:IOM-Germany@iom.int)  
Internet: [www.iom.int/germany](http://www.iom.int/germany)

#### **b) Special Migrants Assistance Programme (SMAP)**

- The SMAP programme allows any returnee and any accompanying person to book their return through the International Organization for Migration (IOM) at their own expense. At the same time you can ensure that you can accompany friends or family members, who may be receiving assistance from the REAG/GARP programme for example, on the same flight.
- As stated above, the contact address for the SMAP programme is the IOM.

#### **c) Returning Experts Programme**

- The programme specifically supports the professional integration of young and experienced experts from developing and emerging countries, who have completed their training in Germany and are interested in returning to their countries of origin. The costs of job induction, employment, travel and transport may be subsidised for returnees who meet the programme criteria. If you are interested and think you may qualify, please contact International Placement Services (Zentrale Auslands- und Fachvermittlung - ZAV). Here is the contact address:

Centre for International Migration and Development (CIM)  
International Placement Services

Returning Experts Programme

Mendelsohnstr. 75-77  
D - 60325 Frankfurt / Main  
Tel.: (0 69) 71 91 21 – 0  
Fax: (0 69) 71 91 21 – 81  
E-mail: [frankfurt-zav.reintegration@arbeitsagentur.de](mailto:frankfurt-zav.reintegration@arbeitsagentur.de)  
Internet: [www.zav-reintegration.de](http://www.zav-reintegration.de)

#### d) Additional assisted return programmes

- You will find more programmes for voluntary return on the website [www.zirf.eu](http://www.zirf.eu) - e.g. for returnees to Northern Iraq, Kosovo, Armenia, Afghanistan, Iran, Nigeria, Pakistan, Somaliland  
Give us a call – we will be happy to advise you  
0911 / 943 – 4127 or 0911 / 943 – 4110

#### e) General questions on repatriation

- Apart from the above-mentioned return programmes, various organisations offer assistance schemes for certain countries of return. The Information Centre for Voluntary Return (ZIRF) at the Federal Office has an overview. Here is the contact address:

Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF)  
Department 212  
- ZIRF -  
Frankenstr. 210  
D-90461 Nuremberg  
Tel.: (09 11) 9 43 – 41 27  
Fax: (09 11) 9 43 – 41 99  
E-mail: [zirf@bamf.de](mailto:zirf@bamf.de)  
Internet: [www.zirf.eu](http://www.zirf.eu); [www.bamf.de](http://www.bamf.de)

You will also find further information on the website of the Federal Office at [www.bamf.de](http://www.bamf.de). You can use the link to the ZIRF database ([www.zirf.eu](http://www.zirf.eu)) to obtain further information on assisted return and on the situation in various countries of origin.

### Assistance from the REAG/GARP programme

#### Travel costs

##### Transport costs

Train, bus, plane	actual amount
Private vehicle (fuel allowance)	€250

##### Travel assistance

for adults	€200
for juveniles and children under 12	€100



No travel assistance is available for nationals of European third states, i.e. non-EU states, who may enter federal territory without a visa and who entered Germany after the date of the respective exemption from the visa requirement. This applies in particular to nationals from Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia (visa exemption since 19.12.2009) and Bosnia-Herzegovina and Albania (visa exemption since 15.12.2010). No travel assistance is available for nationals from Kosovo, who entered the Federal Republic after 31.12.2014.

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#### GARP start-up help

##### Country group 1

*Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo - only for Serbs and Roma*

for adults	€750
for juveniles and children under 12	€375

Max. €2,250 per family in the event of an incontestable decision pursuant to § 27a Asylum Procedure Act (AsylVfG), so-called Dublin case.

**Kosovo (here only for members of the Serb and Roma minorities, if entry was before 01.01.2015)**

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*Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia and Herzegovina (\*\*), Georgia, Iran, Kosovo (except members of Serb and Roma minorities)(\*\*\*), Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (\*), Montenegro (\*), Russian Federation, Serbia (\*), Turkey and Ukraine.*

(\*) if entry was before 19.12.2009 / (\*\*) if entry was before 15.12.2010 / (\*\*\*) if entry was before 01.01.2015

##### Country group 2

for adults	€400
for juveniles and children under 12	€200

Max. €1,200 per family in the event of an incontestable decision pursuant to § 27a Asylum Procedure Act (AsylVfG), so-called Dublin case.

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##### Country group 3

*Egypt, Ethiopia, Algeria, Bangladesh, China, Ivory Coast, Eritrea, Ghana, Guinea, India, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Syria and Vietnam*

for adults	€300
for juveniles and children under 12	€150

Max. €900 per family in the event of an incontestable decision pursuant to § 27a Asylum Procedure Act (AsylVfG), so-called Dublin case.

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Benefits from the support programmes are voluntary benefits to which there is no legal entitlement. No benefits are granted in cases of abuse.

Assistance and benefits through the programme can only be provided once for one person.

## A 4: Actors in voluntary return: websites, leaflets and reports

Table 15: Actors in voluntary return: websites, leaflets and reports

Networking and exchange platforms		Links	
Governmental			
International	CSI – Common Support Initiative	website	<a href="http://fedasil.be/en/content/fedasil-eu-and-return">http://fedasil.be/en/content/fedasil-eu-and-return</a>
		other	Briefing Note: <a href="https://5042.fedimbo.belgium.be/sites/5042.fedimbo.belgium.be/files/explorer/Briefing_Note_CSI_-_2014.09.pdf">https://5042.fedimbo.belgium.be/sites/5042.fedimbo.belgium.be/files/explorer/Briefing_Note_CSI_-_2014.09.pdf</a>
	CPEP – Common Planning and Evaluation Platform	website	<a href="http://www.cpep.eu/index.html">www.cpep.eu/index.html</a>
		leaflet	<a href="http://www.cpep.eu/docs/Leaflet_A4_cpep.pdf">www.cpep.eu/docs/Leaflet_A4_cpep.pdf</a>
	EMN-REG European Migration network Return Expert Group	website	<a href="http://www.bamf.de/DE/DasBAMF/EMN/emn-node.html">www.bamf.de/DE/DasBAMF/EMN/emn-node.html</a>
other		Commission Decision on the adoption of the 2015-2016 Work Programme for the European Migration Network. <a href="http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/docs/emnwp2015-2016_en.pdf">http://ec.europa.eu/dgs/home-affairs/what-we-do/networks/european_migration_network/docs/emnwp2015-2016_en.pdf</a>	
National	ZIRF – Centre for Voluntary Return	website	ZIRF database: <a href="https://milo.bamf.de/milop/livelink.exe/fetch/2000/702450/698578/704870/customview.html?func=ll&amp;objId=704870&amp;objAction=browse">https://milo.bamf.de/milop/livelink.exe/fetch/2000/702450/698578/704870/customview.html?func=ll&amp;objId=704870&amp;objAction=browse</a>
		leaflet	<a href="http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Publikationen/Flyer/zirf-flyer-rueckkehrfoerderung_de.pdf?__blob=publicationFile">www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Publikationen/Flyer/zirf-flyer-rueckkehrfoerderung_de.pdf?__blob=publicationFile</a>
	BLK IRM – Coordination Agency for ‘Integrated Return Management’ of the Federal Government and the Federal States	website	<a href="http://www.bamf.de/DE/Rueckkehrfoerderung/Koordinierungsstelle/koordinierungsstelle-rueckkehr-node.html">www.bamf.de/DE/Rueckkehrfoerderung/Koordinierungsstelle/koordinierungsstelle-rueckkehr-node.html</a>
		leaflet	ns
		other	Minor interpellation in the North Rhine-Westphalia Landtag: <a href="http://www.landtag.nrw.de/portal/WWW/dokumentenarchiv/Dokument/MMD16-8223.pdf">www.landtag.nrw.de/portal/WWW/dokumentenarchiv/Dokument/MMD16-8223.pdf</a>
	BeNIP - German authorities network for international project work in the field of return and reintegration	website	ns
		leaflet	ns
		report	Coming Home – 2013/2014 Project Report: <a href="http://www.muenchen.info/soz/pub/pdf/521_coming_home_projektbericht_2013_2014.pdf">www.muenchen.info/soz/pub/pdf/521_coming_home_projektbericht_2013_2014.pdf</a>
Federal State-wide	IMAG – Interministerial Working Group (Schleswig-Holstein)	website	ns
		leaflet	ns
		report	2014 Report: <a href="http://www.frsh.de/uploads/media/IMAG-Bericht-Alternative-AHE.pdf">www.frsh.de/uploads/media/IMAG-Bericht-Alternative-AHE.pdf</a>
Governmental and Not-Governmental			
Federal State-wide	IntegPlan – trans-Federal State integrated return planning	website	<a href="http://www.integplan.de/">www.integplan.de/</a>
		brochure	Brochure on supervision: <a href="http://mobile.integplan.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Aktuell/2013/Flyer_IntegPlan_Supervision2013.pdf">mobile.integplan.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Aktuell/2013/Flyer_IntegPlan_Supervision2013.pdf</a>
		report	2014 Annual Report: <a href="http://mobile.integplan.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Berichte/IntegPlan4-broschuere_web.pdf">http://mobile.integplan.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Berichte/IntegPlan4-broschuere_web.pdf</a>
Municipal	Counselling centre of the Diakonie Trier und Simmern-Trarbach in Rhineland-Palatinate	website	<a href="http://ekkt.ekir.de/trier/2123.0.html">http://ekkt.ekir.de/trier/2123.0.html</a>
		leaflet	ns
Not-Governmental			
International	ERSO – European Reintegration Support Organisations	website	<a href="http://www2.erso-project.eu/homepage/">www2.erso-project.eu/homepage/</a>
		leaflet	Caritas Aachen leaflet on ERSO: <a href="http://www.caritas-aachen.de/gemeinde/ERSO-Deutsch.pdf">www.caritas-aachen.de/gemeinde/ERSO-Deutsch.pdf</a>

Return counselling		Links	
Governmental			
Nationwide	BAMF – Federal Office for Migration and Refugees	website	<a href="http://www.bamf.de/DE/Rueckkehrfoerderung/rueckkehrfoerderung-node.html">www.bamf.de/DE/Rueckkehrfoerderung/rueckkehrfoerderung-node.html</a>
		leaflet	ns
		other	BAMF leaflet containing information on voluntary return programmes for rejected asylum-seekers, cf. Appendix 3
	ZIRF – Counselling	website	<a href="http://www.bamf.de/DE/Rueckkehrfoerderung/Rueckkehrberatung/rueckkehrberatung-node.html">www.bamf.de/DE/Rueckkehrfoerderung/Rueckkehrberatung/rueckkehrberatung-node.html</a>
		leaflet	<a href="http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Publikationen/Flyer/zirf-flyer-rueckkehrfoerderung_de.pdf?__blob=publicationFile">www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Publikationen/Flyer/zirf-flyer-rueckkehrfoerderung_de.pdf?__blob=publicationFile</a>
	Central Placement Office for Work Abroad and Specialist Workers (ZAV) of the Federal Employment Agency	website	<a href="http://www.arbeitsagentur.de/web/content/DE/service/Ueberuns/WeitereDienststellen/ZentraleAuslandsundFachvermittlung/index.htm">www.arbeitsagentur.de/web/content/DE/service/Ueberuns/WeitereDienststellen/ZentraleAuslandsundFachvermittlung/index.htm</a>
leaflet		ns	
Federal State-wide	ZRB – Central Return Counselling Offices for Refugees in Northern, Western, Eastern and Southern Bavaria	website	ZRB Northern Bavaria: <a href="http://zrb-nordbayern.de/">http://zrb-nordbayern.de/</a> , ZRB Southern Bavaria: <a href="http://www.zrb-suedbayern.de/">www.zrb-suedbayern.de/</a>
		leaflet	<a href="http://neu.zrb-nordbayern.de/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Flyer_Bayr_Rueckkehrberatungsstellen.pdf">http://neu.zrb-nordbayern.de/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/Flyer_Bayr_Rueckkehrberatungsstellen.pdf</a>
		report	2013/2014 ZRB Northern Bavaria Project Report: <a href="http://zrb-nordbayern.de/wp-content/uploads/projektbericht_2014.pdf">http://zrb-nordbayern.de/wp-content/uploads/projektbericht_2014.pdf</a>
	LAB NI – Lower Saxony Reception Authority	website	<a href="http://www.lab.niedersachsen.de/portal/live.php?navigation_id=25250&amp;article_id=86619&amp;psmand=193">www.lab.niedersachsen.de/portal/live.php?navigation_id=25250&amp;article_id=86619&amp;psmand=193</a>
		leaflet	Accessible via website (see above)
Municipal	Foreigners authorities	website	e.g. Brandenburg Central Foreigners Authority: <a href="http://service.brandenburg.de/de/zentrale_auslaenderbehoerde_zabh/11328">http://service.brandenburg.de/de/zentrale_auslaenderbehoerde_zabh/11328</a>
		leaflet	ns
		other	For example, 23 September 2014 legal advice of the Lower Saxony Ministry of the Interior and Sport: <a href="http://www.nds-fluerat.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/02/20140923-R%C3%BCckf%C3%BChrungserlass-endg-Fassung-23-09-2014-15-00-Uhr-.pdf">http://www.nds-fluerat.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/02/20140923-R%C3%BCckf%C3%BChrungserlass-endg-Fassung-23-09-2014-15-00-Uhr-.pdf</a>
	Social Services in the collective accommodation for asylum-seekers	website	For example, support for asylum-seekers at the Offenburg governmental collective accommodation: <a href="http://www.offenburg.de/html/sozialdienst_in_der_staatl_gemeinschaftsunterkunft_fuer_asylb.html">www.offenburg.de/html/sozialdienst_in_der_staatl_gemeinschaftsunterkunft_fuer_asylb.html</a>
		brochure	For example, fact sheet of the AWO Esslingen District Association (AWO Kreisverband Esslingen e. V.): <a href="http://www.nfant.de/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/AWO-Aufgaben-Stand-Januar2013.pdf">www.nfant.de/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/AWO-Aufgaben-Stand-Januar2013.pdf</a>
Non-Governmental			
Federal State wide	Raphaelswerk	website	<a href="http://www.raphaelswerk.de/wirberaten/fluechtlinge/">www.raphaelswerk.de/wirberaten/fluechtlinge/</a>
		brochure	Fact sheets on onward migration (for links, see above)
		other	Interactive map of Germany with counselling centres <a href="http://www.raphaelswerk.de/beratungsstellen/">www.raphaelswerk.de/beratungsstellen/</a>
	Caritas Karlsruhe	website	<a href="http://www.caritas-karlsruhe.de/hilfen-und-beratung/menschen-mit-migrationsgeschichte/der-oekumenische-migrationsdienst/rueckkehrberatung-und-rueckkehrhilfen/">www.caritas-karlsruhe.de/hilfen-und-beratung/menschen-mit-migrationsgeschichte/der-oekumenische-migrationsdienst/rueckkehrberatung-und-rueckkehrhilfen/</a>
		leaflet	Multi-language leaflet available for download on website (for links, see above)
	Diakonie Cologne	website	<a href="http://projekt-auswege.kirche-koeln.de/index.php?page=alias&amp;hl=de">http://projekt-auswege.kirche-koeln.de/index.php?page=alias&amp;hl=de</a>
		leaflet	<a href="http://projekt-auswege.kirche-koeln.de/index.php?page=fuer-wen&amp;hl=de">http://projekt-auswege.kirche-koeln.de/index.php?page=fuer-wen&amp;hl=de</a>
		other	Information of the Federal States: <a href="http://projekt-auswege.kirche-koeln.de/index.php?page=laenderinfos&amp;hl=de">projekt-auswege.kirche-koeln.de/index.php?page=laenderinfos&amp;hl=de</a>
	AWO ‘NEW LIFE’ in Hildesheim and Hanover	website	<a href="http://awo-hi.de/index.php?id=332">http://awo-hi.de/index.php?id=332</a>
		leaflet	ns
	DRK Hamm	website	<a href="http://www.drk-hamm.de/framesets/f_waswirtun.htm">www.drk-hamm.de/framesets/f_waswirtun.htm</a>
		leaflet	<a href="http://www.drk-hamm.de/Download/Flyer%20deutsch2014.pdf">www.drk-hamm.de/Download/Flyer%20deutsch2014.pdf</a>
	Hamburg Refugee Centre	website	<a href="http://www.fz-hh.de/">www.fz-hh.de/</a>
		leaflet	<a href="http://www.fz-hh.de/download/flyer-rueckkehrprojekt.pdf">www.fz-hh.de/download/flyer-rueckkehrprojekt.pdf</a>
	JADWIGA	website	<a href="http://www.jadwiga-online.de/index.php">www.jadwiga-online.de/index.php</a>
leaflet		<a href="http://www.jadwiga-online.de/flyer.php">www.jadwiga-online.de/flyer.php</a>	
report		2013 Annual Report: <a href="http://www.jadwiga-online.de/data/jahresbericht2013.pdf">www.jadwiga-online.de/data/jahresbericht2013.pdf</a>	
Municipal	GGUA – Not-for-profit Association for the Support of Asylum-Seekers	website	<a href="http://www.ggua.de/Beratung-zur-Freiwilligen-Rueckkehr.47.0.html">www.ggua.de/Beratung-zur-Freiwilligen-Rueckkehr.47.0.html</a>
		leaflet	ns
		report	Report on activities: <a href="http://www.ggua.de/GGUA-Infobrief.158.0.html">www.ggua.de/GGUA-Infobrief.158.0.html</a>

Return and reintegration projects			Links
Governmental and Inter-Governmental			
International	ERIN – European reintegration Instrument network	website	<a href="http://www.bamf.de/DE/Rueckkehrfoerderung/ProjektERIN/projekt_erin-node.html">www.bamf.de/DE/Rueckkehrfoerderung/ProjektERIN/projekt_erin-node.html</a>
		leaflet	<a href="http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Downloads/Infothek/Rueckkehrfoerderung/erin-projektsteckbrief_20150313.pdf?__blob=publicationFile">www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Downloads/Infothek/Rueckkehrfoerderung/erin-projektsteckbrief_20150313.pdf?__blob=publicationFile</a>
	RACOB – Return Assistance in Armenia	website	<a href="http://www.integplan.de/RACOB.679.0.html">www.integplan.de/RACOB.679.0.html</a>
		brochure	<a href="http://www.aaas.fr/res/2012-2014%20RACOB%20leaflet_arm_eng_rus.pdf">www.aaas.fr/res/2012-2014%20RACOB%20leaflet_arm_eng_rus.pdf</a>
National	REAG/GARP	website	<a href="http://germany.iom.int/de/reaggarp#_ftn2">http://germany.iom.int/de/reaggarp#_ftn2</a>
		leaflet	<a href="http://germany.iom.int/sites/default/files/REAG/REAG-GARP%202015%20-%20Infoblatt%20Deutsch.pdf">http://germany.iom.int/sites/default/files/REAG/REAG-GARP%202015%20-%20Infoblatt%20Deutsch.pdf</a>
		report	2013 Programme Report: <a href="http://germany.iom.int/sites/default/files/REAG/AVR_Report_2013.pdf">http://germany.iom.int/sites/default/files/REAG/AVR_Report_2013.pdf</a>
	IOM – Reintegration for Returnees in Northern Iraq	website	<a href="http://germany.iom.int/de/reintegration-f%C3%BCr-r%C3%BCckkehrer-den-nordirak">http://germany.iom.int/de/reintegration-f%C3%BCr-r%C3%BCckkehrer-den-nordirak</a>
		leaflet	<a href="http://germany.iom.int/sites/default/files/Reintegration%20Nordirak_%20Flyer_deutsch.pdf">http://germany.iom.int/sites/default/files/Reintegration%20Nordirak_%20Flyer_deutsch.pdf</a>
	URA 2	website	<a href="http://www.bamf.de/DE/Rueckkehrfoerderung/ProjektKosovo/projektkosovo-node.html">www.bamf.de/DE/Rueckkehrfoerderung/ProjektKosovo/projektkosovo-node.html</a>
		leaflet	<a href="http://www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Publikationen/Flyer/20150223_ura2_de.pdf?__blob=publicationFile">www.bamf.de/SharedDocs/Anlagen/DE/Publikationen/Flyer/20150223_ura2_de.pdf?__blob=publicationFile</a>
	Returning Specialists	website	<a href="http://www.cimonline.de/de/61.asp">www.cimonline.de/de/61.asp</a>
Federal State wide	IOM – Reintegration Assistance for Returnees to Vietnam (Berlin)	leaflet	<a href="http://www.cimonline.de/documents/CIM-Flyer-prf-de.pdf">www.cimonline.de/documents/CIM-Flyer-prf-de.pdf</a>
		website	<a href="http://germany.iom.int/de/avr-berlin-de">http://germany.iom.int/de/avr-berlin-de</a>
		brochure	<a href="http://germany.iom.int/sites/default/files/AVRBerlin/131218_IOM_VIETNAM_RUECKKEHR_E5.pdf">http://germany.iom.int/sites/default/files/AVRBerlin/131218_IOM_VIETNAM_RUECKKEHR_E5.pdf</a>
	Municipal	QUARK (Schwäbisch Gmünd)	website
leaflet			ns
Coming Home (Greater Munich)		website	<a href="http://www.muenchen.de/rathaus/Stadtverwaltung/Sozialreferat/Wohnungsamt/rueckkehrhilfen/E_U_projekt_Coming_Home.html">www.muenchen.de/rathaus/Stadtverwaltung/Sozialreferat/Wohnungsamt/rueckkehrhilfen/E_U_projekt_Coming_Home.html</a>
		leaflet	<a href="http://www.muenchen.info/soz/pub/pdf/286_ch_flyer.pdf">www.muenchen.info/soz/pub/pdf/286_ch_flyer.pdf</a>
		report/ study	2013/2014 Project Report: <a href="http://www.muenchen.info/soz/pub/pdf/521_coming_home_projektbericht_2013_2014.pdf">www.muenchen.info/soz/pub/pdf/521_coming_home_projektbericht_2013_2014.pdf</a>
Rhineland-Palatinate return initiative		website	ns
		leaflet	ns
		other	Electronic letter: <a href="http://mifkif.rlp.de/fileadmin/mifkif/Integration/Themen/LI_R%C3%BCckkehr_2014.pdf">http://mifkif.rlp.de/fileadmin/mifkif/Integration/Themen/LI_R%C3%BCckkehr_2014.pdf</a>
Not-Governmental			
International	RECEA – Armenia Reintegration Centre	website	<a href="http://int.awo-bremerhaven.de/index.php?id=525">http://int.awo-bremerhaven.de/index.php?id=525</a>
		leaflet	<a href="http://int.awo-bremerhaven.de/fileadmin/webdaten/pdf/int/recea_flyer_deutsch_web.pdf">http://int.awo-bremerhaven.de/fileadmin/webdaten/pdf/int/recea_flyer_deutsch_web.pdf</a>
		report	Project reports: <a href="http://int.awo-bremerhaven.de/index.php?id=528">http://int.awo-bremerhaven.de/index.php?id=528</a>
National	Solwodi – Solidarity with Women in Distress	website	<a href="http://www.solwodi.de/507.0.html#c1002">www.solwodi.de/507.0.html#c1002</a>
		leaflet	<a href="http://www.solwodi.de/fileadmin/_medias/pdf/Materialien/Rueckkehrflyer_0415.pdf">www.solwodi.de/fileadmin/_medias/pdf/Materialien/Rueckkehrflyer_0415.pdf</a>
		report	2014 Annual Report: <a href="http://www.solwodi.de/fileadmin/_medias/pdf/Beratungsstellen/Rueckkehrprojekt_2014.pdf">www.solwodi.de/fileadmin/_medias/pdf/Beratungsstellen/Rueckkehrprojekt_2014.pdf</a>
		other	Facebook: <a href="https://de-de.facebook.com/solwodi.de">https://de-de.facebook.com/solwodi.de</a>
Federal State wide	Hamburg-Ghana-Bridge	website	<a href="http://www.raphaelswerk.de/wirberaten/fluechtlinge/">www.raphaelswerk.de/wirberaten/fluechtlinge/</a>
		brochure	Fact sheets on onward migration (see above)
		other	Interactive map of counselling centres: <a href="http://www.raphaelswerk.de/beratungsstellen/">www.raphaelswerk.de/beratungsstellen/</a>
Federal State wide	AWO Nuremberg – Kosovo project	website	<a href="http://www.awo-nuernberg.de/de/migration-und-integration/kosovoprojekt.html">www.awo-nuernberg.de/de/migration-und-integration/kosovoprojekt.html</a>
		leaflet	<a href="http://www.awo-nuernberg.de/fileadmin/filesnew/Referat_Mul/Kosovo/Kosovo_Flyer_2015.pdf">www.awo-nuernberg.de/fileadmin/filesnew/Referat_Mul/Kosovo/Kosovo_Flyer_2015.pdf</a>



## A 5: Advertisement and article on the 'Reintegration Assistance for Returnees to Vietnam' project

Advertisement in a Vietnamese-language newspaper in Berlin on the Berlin IOM Information and Return Counselling Centre and the 'Reintegration Assistance for Returnees to Vietnam' projekt

**HỖ TRỢ KHỞI NGHIỆP CHO NGƯỜI VIỆT HỒI HƯƠNG**

Quý vị muốn trở về Việt Nam nhưng cần được hỗ trợ trước khi về quê nhà? Xin vui lòng liên hệ với chúng tôi! Chúng tôi chuyên tư vấn và hỗ trợ tài chính, giúp đỡ của 35 chức IOM của các nước đang tiếp nhận hồi hương, để họ tái hòa nhập xã hội, giúp họ khởi nghiệp thành công tại quê nhà, bao gồm:

- Giáo dục và đào tạo.
- Thành lập doanh nghiệp và tìm việc làm.
- Hỗ trợ y tế, • Hỗ trợ đời sống xã hội.

Chúng tôi sẽ giúp quý vị xây dựng một kế hoạch tái hòa nhập chi tiết. Khi quý vị trở về quê hương, các đồng nghiệp của chúng tôi ở IOM tại Việt Nam sẽ hỗ trợ quý vị thực hiện kế hoạch đó. Trước mắt, chương trình hỗ trợ này chỉ dành cho người Việt đăng ký tại Berlin và chưa có quyền lưu trú chắc chắn. Ai có nhu cầu xin liên hệ với chúng tôi.

**Phong thông tin và tư vấn hồi hương, IOM, Ausländerbehörde Berlin:**  
Haus A, Etage 1, Nr. 177, Friedrich-Krause-Ufer 24 - 13353 Berlin, Tel.: 030 90285 4843, E-Mail: [awd@iom.int](mailto:awd@iom.int), [ioim@iom.int](mailto:ioim@iom.int). Giờ tiếp khách: thứ 2, thứ 3: 10.00 - 14.00, thứ 4, thứ 5: 10.00 - 16.00. Thứ 6: 10.00 - 16.00. Hướng dẫn đi bằng phương tiện giao thông công cộng: U9 (tuyến tàu đến Alexander Str.) - S 41, S 42 (tuyến tàu đến Westhafen, Bus 147, M27).

Source: Berlin IOM Information and Return Counselling Centre – 'Vietnam Integrated Return Planning'.

## Article on the Berlin IOM Information and Return Counselling Centre and the 'Reintegration Assistance for Returnees to Vietnam' project on a Vietnamese news website (June 2014)

**www.NgườiViệt.de**  
TRANG THÔNG TIN & GIẢI TRÍ PHỤC VỤ CỘNG ĐỒNG NGƯỜI VIỆT Ở ĐỨC VÀ CHÂU ÂU

TRANG CHỦ | ẢNH CỘNG ĐỒNG MỚI | ẢNH CỘNG ĐỒNG CŨ | NGÀY NÀY NĂM XƯA | THƯ VIỆN VIDEO | TRUYỀN KIỂU | Tìm kiếm

Tin mới: Xem mùa nón Việt giữa trời Âu

Tin tức = Văn - Thơ - Tùy bút

30.06.2014 09:53

**Phóng sự Hà An (Berlin): THĂM VẤN PHÒNG THÔNG TIN VÀ TƯ VẤN HỒI HƯƠNG CỦA TỔ CHỨC DI CƯ QUỐC TẾ (IOM) TẠI BERLIN (Kỳ 3)**  
09/04/2014 23:47

(NgườiViệt.de) Hầu hết những người được IOM Berlin hỗ trợ hồi hương đều tái hội nhập thành công tại quê nhà. Mỗi người một số phận, họ đã chọn những con đường khác nhau để ổn định cuộc sống của mình sau những năm tháng tha phương, cầu thực nơi đất khách, quê người.

Ảnh V. đang làm việc trong tiệm móng tay của mình

Nhân viên IOM Việt Nam đã đến thăm 14 trong tổng số 30 người hồi hương trở về từ Berlin. NgườiViệt.de xin giới thiệu với bạn đọc một vài ví dụ từ báo cáo của họ.

Ông chủ một quán ăn ở Hưng Yên

**CHỦ YẾM - LỊCH TUẦN NÀY - CHỦ YẾM**

- Hội người Việt Nam Halberstadt kêu gọi ủng hộ biển đảo quê hương
- Thư mời tham gia Pháp hội Trung Phong Tam Thời Hệ Niệm tại Chùa Phước Duyên Magdeburg (28. - 29.06.2014)
- Mời dự Đêm "Thơ Việt ở Đức & Bucher von Vögen" (28.06.2014)
- Công ty Truyền hình Đất Việt đồng hành cùng World Cup: Tặng đầu máy đến hết ngày 13.07.2014
- Thông báo về cuộc thi nấu ăn cho cộng đồng tại Đức (28.06.2014)

**TIN HOT CẬP NHẬT**

- Sự kiện 3, 041 người và 1000 NGHĨEM!
- Sa Huỳnh (Berlin): Thơ cộng đồng hướng về biển Đông
- Hùng Lý (Berlin): HÀ NỘI TRONG LÒNG NGƯỜI BỊ XA
- Ghi chép của Vũ Lương (Berlin): NHỚ NHƯ THỜI NHƯNG ĐÓ LẮ

**TÊN VĂN**

- Sa Huỳnh (Berlin): Thơ cộng đồng hướng về biển Đông
- Hùng Lý (Berlin): HÀ NỘI TRONG LÒNG NGƯỜI BỊ XA
- Ghi chép của Vũ Lương (Berlin): NHỚ NHƯ THỜI NHƯNG ĐÓ LẮ

**ANH CỘNG ĐỒNG**

**TÊN ĐỌC NHỮNG 50 NGÀY**

- Vũ Lương Sa Huỳnh (Berlin): MUỐN TRAI TRUNG QUỐC VÀ...
- Hùng Lý (Berlin): NHỮNG NGÀY THÁNG...

Source: Berlin IOM Information and Return Counselling Centre – 'Reintegration Assistance for Returnees to Vietnam'.

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# Abbreviations

ACCH	African Christian Council
AMIF	Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund
AP	Associated Press
AsylBIG	Asylum-Seekers' Benefits Act (Asylbewerberleistungsgesetz)
AsylVfG	Asylum Procedure Act (Asylverfahrensgesetz)
AufenthG	German Residence Act (Aufenthaltsgesetz)
AuswErlV	Act to Protect Emigrants in conjunction with the Ordinance on Emigrant Counselling Permits (Auswandererberatungserlaubnisverordnung)
AuswSG	Act to Protect Emigrants (Gesetz zum Schutze der Auswanderer und Auswanderinnen)
AVR	Assisted Voluntary Return
AVRR	Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration
AVwVAufenthG	General Administrative Regulation on the Residence Act (Allgemeine Verwaltungsvorschrift zum Aufenthaltsgesetz)
AWO	Workers' Welfare Association (Arbeiterwohlfahrt)
AZR	Central Register of Foreigners (Ausländerzentralregister)
BAGFW	Federal working group of the statutory welfare organisations (Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft der Freien Wohlfahrtspflege)
BAMF	Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (Bundesamt für Migration und Flüchtlinge)
BeNIP	Network of authorities for international project work in the field of return and reintegration (Behördliches Netzwerk für internationale Projektarbeit im Bereich der Rückkehr und Reintegration)
BLK IRM	Coordination Agency for 'Integrated Return Management' of the Federal Government and the Federal States (Bund-Länder-Koordinierungsstelle Integriertes Rückkehrmanagement)
BMI	Federal Ministry of the Interior (Bundesministerium des Innern)
BMZ	Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (Bundesministeriums für Wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung)
BUL	Berlin Accommodation Control Centre (Berliner Unterbringungsleitstelle)
CDU	Christian Democratic Union (Christlich Demokratische Union)
CIM	Centre for International Migration and Development
CPEP	Common Planning and Evaluation Platform
CSI	Common Support Initiative
CSU	Christian Social Union of Bavaria (Christlich-Soziale Union)
DRK	German Red Cross (Deutsches Rotes Kreuz)
EASY	Initial distribution of asylum-seekers among reception centres (Erstverteilung von Asylbegehrenden)
EMN	European Migration Network
ERSO	European Reintegration Support Organisations
EU	European Union
EuGH	European Court of Justice (Europäischer Gerichtshof)

FamFG	Act on Procedure in Family Matters and Non-Contentious Matters (Gesetz über das Verfahren in Familiensachen und in den Angelegenheiten der freiwilligen Gerichtsbarkeit)
GGUA	Not-for-profit Association for the Support of Asylum-Seekers in Münster (Gemeinnützige Gesellschaft zur Unterstützung Asylsuchender e.V. in Münster)
GÜP	Border Crossing Certificate (Grenzübertrittsbescheinigung)
IMIC	Intercultural Migrant Integration Centre (Interkulturelles Migranten IntegrationsCenter)
IntegPlan	Integrated Return Planning (Länderübergreifende Integrierte Rückkehrplanung)
IO	International Organization
IOM	International Organization for Migration
JVA	Prison (Justizvollzugsanstalt)
LAB NI	Lower Saxony Reception Authority (Landesaufnahmebehörde Niedersachsen)
LAGeSo	Federal State Office for Health and Social Affairs (Landesamt für Gesundheit und Soziales Berlin)
MIFKJF Rheinland-Pfalz	Ministry for Integration, Family Affairs, Children, Youth and Women of Rhineland-Palatinate (Ministerium für Integration, Familie, Kinder, Jugend und Frauen Rheinland-Pfalz)
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
No	Number
OFII	Office Français de l'Immigration et de l'Intégration
Para	Paragraph
QUARK	Skill-building, Assistance, Job Perspectives, Reintegration (Qualifizierung, Unterstützung, Arbeitsperspektiven, Reintegration in Schwäbisch Gmünd)
RACOB	Return Assistance in Armenia
RECEA	Reintegration Center Armenia
RF	European Return Fund
RückHG	German Return Assistance Act (Rückkehrhilfegesetz)
SBC	Schengen Borders Code
SEO	Search Engine Optimisation
SGB	German Social Code (Sozialgesetzbuch)
SMAP	Special Migrants Assistance Programme
Solwodi	Solidarity with Women in Distress
SPD	Social Democratic Party of Germany (Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands)
SSW	South Schleswig Voters' Association (Südschleswigsche Wählerverband)
TIA	Targeted Initiative for Armenia
TIGEO	Targeted Initiative for Georgia
UKZU	Independent Commission on Migration to Germany (Unabhängige Kommission ‚Zuwanderung‘)
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
VwV	Administrative Regulation (Verwaltungsvorschrift)
ZAV	Central Placement Office for Work Abroad and Specialist Workers of the Federal Employment Agency (Zentrale Auslands- und Fachvermittlung)
ZIRF	Information Centre for Voluntary Return (Zentralstelle für Informationsvermittlung zur Rückkehrförderung)
ZRB	Central Return Counselling Offices for Refugees (Zentrale Rückkehrberatung für Flüchtlinge in Nord-, West-, Ost- und Südbayern)

# List of Tables

Table 1:	Irregularly-staying third-country nationals in Germany (absconders and persons without prior contact with the authorities; estimates for 2010-2014)	17
Table 2:	Number of persons who moved to an unknown address as an indicator of absconded third-country nationals (2010-2014)	17
Table 3:	Asylum-seekers who absconded in the course of the initial distribution (2010-2014)	18
Table 4:	Third-country nationals obliged to leave the country with and without temporary suspension of deportation status (2010-2014)	18
Table 5:	Total number of persons who left voluntarily within REAG/GARP (2010-2014)	20
Table 6:	Irregularly-staying third-country nationals* who left voluntarily as part of REAG/GARP (2010-2014)	20
Table 7:	Deportations and removals of third-country nationals (2010-2014)	21
Table 8:	Types of governmental and non-governmental actors disseminating information in voluntary return and their scope of action (2015)	31
Table 9:	Other actors disseminating information on (voluntary) return, their role and the rationale for their involvement	40
Table 10:	Tools used for disseminating information on voluntary return by governmental and non-governmental actors (part 1)	47
Table 10:	Tools used for disseminating information on voluntary return by governmental and non-governmental actors (part 2)	48
Table 11:	Contents, actors and channels of the dissemination of information on the possibilities of voluntary return	54
Table 12:	The number of third-country nationals who have returned (2010-2014)	65
Table 13:	Number of irregularly-staying third-country nationals not in contact with the authorities (2010-2014)	66
Table 14:	Data-collection methods used	67
Table 15:	Actors in voluntary return: websites, leaflets and reports	72



# Publications of the Research Centre of the Federal Office

## Working Paper

		<b>10/2007</b>	Familiennachzug in Deutschland Verfasser: Axel Kreienbrink und Stefan Rühl
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Frankenstraße 210  
90461 Nürnberg  
[www.emn-germany.de](http://www.emn-germany.de)  
E-Mail: [emn@bamf.de](mailto:emn@bamf.de)

**Author:**

Janne Grote

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